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WOMEN IN GONCHAROV'S FICTION

by

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University of Alberta

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation, Women in Goncharov's Fiction, is to bring out by means of thematic analysis some neglected aspects of Goncharov's work, to add new insights to existent scholarship, and to explore the treatment of women in all of this nineteenth century author's fiction. A further aim is to relate the topic to its social background and to consider it in the light of progressive thought of the time and of the growing effectiveness of supporters of the woman's cause in turning public attention in favour of equal rights for women and their emancipation.

The plan of the dissertation is based on considerations both of chronology and theme. The first chapter discusses the shorter fiction written at the beginning of Goncharov's career. The second chapter considers the heroines of the novels as well as the secondary women characters who often serve on a thematic or structural level as foils to the heroines. The third chapter is thematic in its organization, dealing with mothers and themes connected with parenthood. The fourth and final chapter discusses the shorter fiction written towards the end of Goncharov's career.

This dissertation has aimed at giving a comprehensive view of the topic and has paid as much attention to Goncharov's shorter fiction as to his novels, which are his best known works. An advantage of such an approach was that it allowed one to trace the development of the author's

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thinking on the subject not only over the two decades or so in which he was occupied with he novels (1847-1869), but over the impressive span of six decades from his first literary activity in 1832 to his final sketch in 1891. This thesis concludes that there is a development and ultimately a reversal of the author's attitude over the years. In fact one could say of Goncharov's work in its entirety that his estimation of women rose steadily to reach a climax in the last chapters of his final novel, Obryv, and that thereafter it fell markedly. In his later works he no longer supports women as a socially distinguishable group.

On the whole one could say that most of Goncharov's women are what might be labelled today "women with positive thinking." They strive for happiness and self-realization, they are open to good influences, whether stemming from the past or promised in the future. They have a good sense of judgement and, while remaining basically unchanged and true to their own nature, they know when to make adjustments, concessions and even sacrifices. Such changes may be painful, but the cult of suffering and of resignation is definitely not a part of their character. For Goncharov's women, a failure is merely a transitional phase, an experience from which one can emerge all the stronger and more mature in order to live one's own life. For Goncharov life itself is neither a blessing nor a penance. It is what a person, be it a woman or a man, makes of it.

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I would like to express my gratitude to all the members of my committee, especially my supervisor, Dr. R. L. Busch, and Professor M. V. Dimič for their valuable suggestions, helpful criticism and cooperative attitude. My warm thanks also go to those friends in and outside this university, whose continued encouragement acted as an incentive throughout my work.

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INTRODUCTION

The works of Goncharov are remarkable for the number and the variety of memorable female characters and themes connected with women, many of which are still relevant today.[1] The female characters in the novels, which are Goncharov's best known works, have from the start been the objects of both praise and discussion. When Goncharov's first novel, Obyknovennaia istoriia, was published in 1847, Belinskii expressed his particular admiration for the mastery and variety which the author displayed in the depiction of women characters and for their truthfulness to life, a feature that, according to him, was unprecedented in Russian literature of the time.[2] And yet, in spite of this attention, many of the characters and themes connected with women, particularly those occurring in the minor works, have been insufficiently explored, misrepresented, or entirely overlooked.

The purpose of this dissertation is to bring out by means of thematic analysis some neglected aspects of

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[1] Two editions of Goncharov's works are used conjointly in this dissertation - most frequently Sobranie sochinenii, 8 vols. (Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1952-55), and, when necessary, Sobranie sochinenii, 8 vols. (Moscow: Pravda, Biblioteka Ogonek, 1952). Unless otherwise stated, quotations from Goncharov's works are from Goslitizdat edition. In this case they will be referred to by volume and page number only. The works which can be found only in the Pravda edition (Likhaia bolest', Pis'ma stolichnogo druga k provintsial'nomu zhenikhu, Ukha, Prevratnost' sud'by, and the article Rozhdestvenskaia elka) will be referred to as "P." followed by volume and page number.

[2] See V.G. Belinskii, Sobranie sochinenii (Moscow 1948) III, 813.

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Goncharov's works, to add new insights to existent scholarship and to explore the treatment of women in all of the author's fiction. A further aim is to relate the topic to its social background and to consider it in the light of progressive thought of the time and of the growing effort of supporters of women's rights to turn public opinion in favour of emancipation and social equality for women. Although this question was raised with varying intensity in Goncharov's works, it never completely ceased to interest the author. The woman characters and the themes connected with women should therefore be judged in relation to this vital contemporary issue.

In nineteenth century Russia, as in the rest of Europe, the question of women's equality with men was the subject of considerable discussion.[3] Interest in woman and her unequal place in the family and in society as compared to men had already begun to acquire importance in Russia in the thirties and the forties, mainly under the influence of the writings of George Sand. In Russia her works were particularly welcomed by the intelligentsia because of their belief in the goodness of mankind. Her plea for a woman's right to love and to personal happiness found many sympathetic supporters.[4]

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[3] On the question of the position of women in 19th century Russia, as well as in the rest of Europe, see Richard Stites, The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia (Princeton 1978), especially 3-63.

[4] See S. Gasster, "Point of view in the novels of Zola, Galdos, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy," Diss. George Washington University 1968, 83. Soviet scholarship, however, tends to

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Her influence at that time, however, concerned sexual equality rather than equal rights between women and men. The woman question as such, with its stress on education, work and economic independence, only became an issue in the fifties. This was partly the result of the Crimean War, during which women earned praise and recognition as nurses working under the supervision of a noted surgeon and educator, Nicolai Pirogov.[5]

Men of letters contributed to this debate in a lively manner: Russian literature of the nineteenth century is replete with examples of works where female characters and related themes are of central importance. Among these writers Goncharov stands out as revealing a particular interest in women and their lot. As early as the thirties and forties, when, as we have seen, ideas about the women's question were only in their formative stage, Goncharov had, in his individual and often subtle way, already raised the question of a woman's right to happiness and of the equality

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[4](cont'd)be sceptical of the influence of George Sand and traces the origins of the women's question to Pushkin's Tat'iana. See V.I. Kuleshov, ed., Literaturnye sviazi Rossii i zapadnoi Evropy v XIX veke (Moscow 1965), 229. For Goncharov's own views on George Sand see Goncharov, VIII, 57-59. The author (VIII, 150) appreciated George Sand as a writer, but he did not approve of the sexual freedom of her heroines. Later, however, when referring to the period of the thirties and the forties, he specifically stressed that it had been a period when different types of reform concerned with injustices in society and in family life were the main preoccupations of the intelligentsia (VIII, 150).

[5] Stites 30-33. Cathy Porter in her Fathers and Daughters, Russian Women in the Revolution (London 1976), 48-49, links the growth of the question first with George Sand and later with tidings about the growing women's movement in Europe and in America as well as with the Crimean War and finally with the emancipation of the serfs in 1861.

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of women as human beings.

One may suppose that Goncharov's personal interest in the problem was something more than a desire to participate in the discussion of a public issue. A contributing factor might well have been the personal injustice to which he had been exposed in his school days and the unfriendly and derogatory references to his merchant class origin and to his subsequent employment as a bureaucrat, references which he had to endure all his life.[6] This would have made him especially sensitive to the grievances of what at the time might have been considered a socially underprivileged group. Other socially deprived groups such as the peasants, who were oppressed by serfdom, received only passing attention, a fact for which the author was, by his own admission, many times reproached.[7] Women seem to be the only socially identifiable group to which Goncharov lent his support as an author.[8]

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[6] For example see A.D. Alekseev, Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva I.A. Goncharova (Moscow 1960) 14, 16, 19 and 108; L.S. Utevskii, Zhizn' Goncharova (Moscow 1931) 20-21 and 92; A.P. Rybasov, I.A. Goncharov (Moscow 1957) 128; Milton Ehre, Oblomov and his Creator (Princeton 1973) 12-13. For Goncharov's own estimate of the social standing of the merchant class see VIII, 73. As late as 1869, when Goncharov was already a well known writer, Turgenev, his literary rival, in the course of expressing a derogatory opinion on Obryv, commented maliciously that the novel was written by a bureaucrat for bureaucrats: "Eto napisano chinovnikom dlia chinovnikov i chinovnits" (quoted in Rybasov 322).

[7] Goncharov, VII, 316. See also Ehre 50-51. The author himself claims that this omission was the result of his insufficient knowledge of peasant life (VII, 316).

[8] As one can see from a letter written in 1866, Goncharov stressed his interest in women, particularly Russian women, and felt that he knew them well: "Russkikh zhenshchin ia schitaiu luchshimi iz vsekh, i ne po odnomu tol'ko

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The reason for this particular interest in women and their fate can be attributed above all to those intelligent women in the author's life, including his mother,[9] who enabled him to get a first hand impression of their nature and way of life and who caused him to feel respect and admiration for women, a feeling which guided him in the selection of topics and in the portrayal of character in his literary works. Among Goncharov's close friends were some of the most intellectual women of his time. As a young man in Petersburg, Goncharov was a regular guest in the literary salon of the refined and talented Maikov family. Its hostess, Evgeniia Maikova, was the author of stories about women.[10] Her niece, Iuniia Efremova, was a cultivated and charming woman with whom Goncharov maintained a lifelong friendship.[11] Another member of the same family, Ekaterina Maikova, was an intelligent and progressive woman and is believed to have inspired Goncharov in the creation of one

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[8](cont'd)patriotizmu, a i po strogomu, dolgovremennomu izucheniiu ikh." In N.K. Piksanov, ed., Goncharov v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov (Leningrad, 1969), 88. André Mazon in his Ivan Goncharov: un maître du roman russe (Paris, 1914), 226, mentions that Goncharov shows competence in the description of his female characters.

[9] In his letters to the members of his family and his reminiscences Goncharov always spoke with greatest respect about his mother. See, for example, Utevskii 12.

[10] On Goncharov's relationship with the Maikov family see Rybasov 87-92. Evgeniia Maikova was the authoress of several poems and of two stories, "Zhenshchina" and "Zhenshchina v tridtsat' let," which she published between 1840 and 1860 (ibid., 88).

[11] Iuniia Efremova was a close friend of Goncharov with whom the author kept up a correspondence during his numerous voyages. See Rybasov 88-89 and 353-354.

or even two of his heroines.[12] In the fifties Ekaterina Maikova was the editor of a children's magazine to which M. L. Mikhailov, a prominent feminist, was for a while a regular contributor.[13] Whatever the implications may be, it is worth noting that when, in 1858, Mikhailov published his famous article in support of the women's cause entitled "Zhenshchiny, ikh vospitanie i znachenie v sem'e i obshchestve,"[14] it contained many of the themes which had been touched upon by Goncharov in a literary form more than a decade earlier.

Goncharov's interest in the position of women has been commented upon in recently published works on the situation of women in 19th century Russia. In his excellent study The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia Richard Stites describes the background and the growth of the feminist movement and specifically points to Goncharov as an author whose female characters reflected the spirit and the growing stage of consciousness not shared by heroines of earlier literature.[15] In The Emancipation of Women in Russian Literature and Society Carolina de Maegd-Soep devotes a

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[12] See O.M. Chemena, Sozdanie dvukh romanov: Goncharov i shestidesiatnitsa E.P. Maikova (Moscow 1966). For a different point of view see N.K. Piksanov, Roman Goncharova 'Obryv' v svete sotsial'noi istorii (Leningrad 1968) 187-91.
[13] See Chemena 23. Goncharov himself contributed travelogues for children to this periodical.
[14] M.L. Mikhailov, "Zhenshchiny, ikh vospitanie i znachenie v sem'e i obshchestve," Sochineniia (Goslitizdat, Moscow 1958) III, 369-431. In 1861 a very similar point of view was expressed by D.I. Pisarev in his article "Zhenskie typy v romanakh i povestiakh Pisemskogo, Turgeneva i Goncharova," Sochineniia (Moscow 1955) I, 231-73, especially 231-41.
[15] Stites 47, also 99.

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chapter to Goncharov in which she attempts with varying success to trace the progressive features of the major female characters in the novels.[16] These two works, however, are above all studies in social history and deal little with the literary aspects of Goncharov's works.

As a literary artist, Goncharov has his own way of approaching the issue. In contrast to some other writers of his time, he does not describe any glaring social injustices, nor do his women show outright rebellion or perform heroic feats. He generally puts them in an attractive setting, endows them with charm and beauty, and as a rule does not let them lose out in their encounters with men or with life's difficulties. Although Goncharov's women are capable of deep feeling and occasionally have to pass through periods of great unhappiness, the cult of suffering and of resignation is definitely not a part of their character. For Goncharov's women, a failure is merely a transitional phase, an experience from which one can emerge all the stronger and more mature in order to live one's own life. Women may not necessarily triumph either, but in such cases their life stories are left open-ended, and the reader is allowed to draw his own conclusions.

However the social issues of the times play only a subsidiary role in the works of Goncharov: the emphasis is

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[16] Carolina de Maegd-Soep, The Emancipation of Women in Russian Literature and Society (Ghent State University 1978). She devotes most attention to Ol'ga in Oblomov, whom she describes as a "sublime woman" (159), but also mentions Naden'ka and Lizaveta Adueva in Obyknovennaia istoriia and Vera in Obryv.

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always on the characters themselves. In Goncharov's own view, no amount of topicality or background detail can substitute for psychological depth:

> Odna podvizhnaia kartina vneshnikh uslovii zhizni, tak nazyvaemye nravoopisatel'nye bytovye ocherki nikogda ne proizvedut glubokogo vpechatleniia na chitatelia, esli oni ne zatrogivaiut vmeste i samogo cheloveka, ego psikhologicheskoi storony. Ia ne pretenduiu na to, chto vypolnil étu zadachu iskusstva, no soznaius', chto ona prezhde vsego vkhodila v moi vidy. (VIII, 159)

This concentration on the psychological contributes to that quality of freshness in Goncharov's work which has struck modern scholars, some of whom have warned us against the error of seeing his writings only as a record of their time and have stressed their timelessness.[17]

In spite of the importance of women throughout Goncharov's fiction, literary criticism has concentrated mainly on a few characters in his best known works, the novels. The attention of critics has remained confined above all to Ol'ga in Oblomov, to Vera and also the grandmother in Obryv, and to a lesser extent to Lizaveta Adueva in Obyknovennaia istoriia. The other characters such as Agaf'ia in Oblomov or Marfen'ka in Obryv have generally been brought in by critics who wished to contrast them favourably with

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[17] See Russell Mechtild, Untersuchungen zur Theorie und Praxis der Typisierung bei I. A. Goncarov (Munich 1978), 344; V.A. Nedzvetskii, Realism I.A. Goncharova (Moscow 1973) 17-18; Janko Lavrin, Goncharov (New Haven 1954), 60; V. Setchkarev, Ivan Goncharov, his Life and Works (Würzburg 1974) 161; A.G. Tseitlin, I. A. Goncharov (Moscow 1950) 327. The timelessness of Goncharov's art had already been noticed by Pisarev (I, 4).

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Ol'ga or Vera.[18] Much of the criticism is moral in tone, with Ol'ga and Vera being mentioned as heroines[19] and models for later generations of Russian women,[20] because of the unusual strength and maturity of character which the critics found in them. But, as mentioned above, not all critics favour Ol'ga and Vera, and some of them question the technical adequacy of the portrayal of the two young heroines.[21] Whatever the views of the critics, a number of women readers felt that they could relate to Goncharov's heroines, and therefore were enthusiastic about the women in Goncharov's fiction regardless of the artistic merit of their description.[22]

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[18] See, for example, Apollon Grigor'ev, Sochineniia (St. Petersburg, 1876) 422 or A.M. Skabichevskii, "Staraia pravda," in M.I. Poliakov, ed., I. A. Goncharov v russkoi kritike (Moscow 1958) 294-95.

[19] Nedzvetskii (13) says that in Goncharov's two later novels it is a heroine who replaces a hero: "Mesto geroia zastupaet ideal'no-real'naia geroinia, igraiushchaia tsentral'nuiu rol' v soderzhatel'noi structure romana." Whereas in Oblomov, according to Nedzvetskii, Ol'ga still shares this position with Shtol'ts, in Obryv it is Vera who takes over the role fully. The above comment points to the variety of interpretations which Goncharov evokes, most of which can be justified by the text.

[20] The following observation by A.F. Zakharkin in the introduction to his Roman I.A. Goncharova, 'Oblomov' (Moscow 1963), 8, typifies the reaction of Russian critics to Goncharov's women: "Chudesnye zhenshchiny, Ol'ga i Vera, byli primerom dlia mnogikh pokolenii russkikh zhenshchin."

[21] See, for example, Alexandra and Sverre Lyngstad, Ivan Goncharov (New York, 1971), 136 and Ehre 193 and 250.

[22] According to Alekseev's account (257-58), at the beginning of 1883, a delegation representing Russian women presented the author with a gift and a congratulatory letter on the occasion of the semicentenary of his literary activity. The letter stated that by the reading of Goncharov's works women could learn "U babushki - zhiteiskoi mudrosti, u Ol'gi - kak liubit' i s dostoinstvom perenosit' razocharovaniia, u Very - kak 'posle gor'kikh opytov oshibok gordosti i nevedenia' ne padat' dukhom..."

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In the case of Ol'ga, who has been more discussed than any other female character, controversy has from the beginning centered on her critical nature and her desire to reform Oblomov, as well as on her capacity to love. The early critics of Oblomov mostly found Ol'ga's character praiseworthy and progressive. Thus Dobroliubov, in his famous article "Chto takoe oblomovshchina," published in 1859, rated Ol'ga not only as a very successful literary character, but as an ideal derived from contemporary life and as a promise of possible progress:

> Ol'ga po svoemu razvitiiu predstavliaet vysshii ideal, kakoi tol'ko mozhet teper' russkii khudozhnik vyzvat' iz tepereshnei russkoi zhizni. Ottogo ona neobyknovennoi iasnost'iu i prostotoi svoei logiki i izumitel'noi garmoniei svoego serdtsa i voli porazhaet nas do togo, chto my gotovy usomnit'sia dazhe v ee poèticheskoi pravde i skazat': "Takikh devushek ne byvaet". No sledia za neiu vo vse protiazhenie romana, my nakhodim, chto ona postoianno verna sebe i svoemu razvitiiu, chto ona predstavliaet ne sententsiiu avtora, a zhivoe litso, tol'ko takoe, kakikh my eshche ne vstrechali. V nei-to bolee, nezheli v Shtol'tse, mozhno videt' namek na novuiu russkuiu zhizn'; ot nee mozhno ozhidat' slova, kotoroe sozhzhet i rasveet oblomovshchinu...[23]

In the same year Druzhinin also expressed high praise for Ol'ga as a literary creation, and admired her intelligence and her insistence on trying to reform Oblomov and save him from his inertia.[24] But Apollon Grigor'ev did not share this enthusiasm, and in the same year 1859 he spoke up against Goncharov's Ol'ga and predicted that as an older women she

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[23] N.A. Dobroliubov, "Chto takoe Oblomovshchina," Sochineniia II (St. Petersburg 1876), 569.
[24] A.V. Druzhinin, "Oblomov," in Poliakov 173-74.

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would make an unpleasant lady, grouchy, and neurotic:

> ...geroinia nashei èpokhi tozhe - ne ego Ol'ga, iz kotoroi pod starost', esli ona tochno takova, kakoiu, vopreki mnogim gratsioznym storonam ee natury, pokazyvaet ee nam avtor, vyidet preotvratitel'naia barynia s vechnoiu i bestsel'noiu nervnoiu trevozhnost'iu, istinnaia muchitel'nitsa vsego okruzhaiushchego, odna iz zhertv bog znaet chego-to.[25]

As one can see, the differences in critical approach to Ol'ga are more dependent on the critics' own values and prejudices than on a detailed interpretation of the text. It is typical that Pisarev reversed his view on Ol'ga in the space of only two years. In his article published in 1869 he praised Ol'ga as a strong woman, who was in perfect control of her feelings and who, at the cost of personal suffering, suppressed a love which her reason could not approve:

> ...Ol'ga dolzhna byla pobedit' sebia, razorvat' èto chuvstvo, poka bylo eshche vremia: ona ne imela prava gubit' svoiu zhizn', prinosit' soboiu bespoleznuiu zhertvu. Liubov' stanovitsia nezakonnoi togda, kogda ee ne odobriaet rassudok; zaglushit' golos rassudka znachit davat' voliu strasti, zhivotnomu instinktu. Ol'ga ne mogla tak postupit', i ei prishlos' stradat', poka ne vybolelo v ee dushe obmanutoe chuvstvo.[26]

But in an article published two years later, in 1861, he called Ol'ga "calculating" ("Raschet u Ol'gi beret verkh nad chuvstvom.")[27] and expressed resentment against the author

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[25] Apollon Grigor'ev, I, 421-22.
[26] Pisarev "Oblomov," I, 15.
[27] Pisarev, "Zhenskie tipy v romanakh i povestiakh Pisemskogo, Turgeneva i Goncharova," I, 248. It is significant that among all Goncharov's characters which had appeared up to that time Pisarev considers only Ol'ga worthy of his attention, mainly because of what others considered her ideal personality and her progressive traits.

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for portraying such a self-interested and calculating woman ("ne ta devushka khorosha po mneniiu Goncharova, kotoraia liubit sil'no i beskorystno, a ta, kotoraia umeet vybirat' sebe muzha").[28]

Pisarev's contradictory opinions are especially revealing in that they can both be justified, since they both contain an accurate analysis of Ol'ga's character and of her actions as seen in the text of the novel. In the text itself there is no information that justifies one of these approaches to the exclusion of the other. In the different stages of the novel one can find passages which testify both to Ol'ga's ambitions and calculating nature and to her love for Oblomov. Any certainties are removed by the possibility of self-deception, (IV, 206), the role of the imagination (IV, 382), or the chance of a mistake (IV, 381-82, 431, 432).

It is not surprising, therefore, that attitudes to Ol'ga vary greatly. As a matter of fact, Goncharov's own attitude to her underwent a change throughout the years. So, while writing Oblomov in 1857, the author felt a genuine enthusiasm for his heroine.[29] Later in 1866, when asked if he considered Ol'ga his ideal, he curtly answered that it had been a wrong ideal: "Ol'ga - vash ideal? - sprosila ia. - Neudachnyi! - otvetil pisatel'."[30]

Opinions of critics, both early and modern, also show a

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[28] Ibid., 248.
[29] In a letter to I. I. L'khovskii. Goncharov VIII, 281-82.
[30] Piksanov, ed., 93.

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divergency, with the Russians generally continuing to favour Ol'ga and Western critics viewing her with indifference or resentment. As Milton Ehre says: "Ol'ga as an angel strains our credulity, as a schoolmistress lecturing Oblomov on the virtues of duty and responsibility, our patience."[31]

Vera, the heroine of Obryv, was particularly appreciated by the Russian reading public,[32] and Goncharov himself considered her most likely to represent the type of woman who would bring an answer to the so called woman's question.[33] But in spite of this assessment, most critics of the time noted a discrepancy between Vera's characterization as a woman of great inner strength and her actions. They found her ordinary, "weak, undecided and nervous"[34] and pointed out her inconsistent and vacillating personality[35] and denied that she represented a new type of woman. They found her actions false and incompatible with her social milieu.[36] Modern Western critics have continued this attack from a literary rather than a moralistic viewpoint, and find the portrayal of Vera faulty and contradictory,[37] or melodramatic and poorly motivated,[38] with her transformation

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[31] Ehre 193.
[32] Unlike the critics whose reaction to Obryv has often been negative, the Russian reading public expressed a great interest in the novel and, as mentioned above (n. 19) admired both Vera and the Grandmother.
[33] See "Luchshe pozdno chem nikogda," VIII, 95, 96.
[34] A.M. Skabichevskii, "Staraia pravda," in Poliakov 314.
[35] N.V. Shelgunov, "Talantlivaia bestalannost'," in Poliakov 255.
[36] Skabichevskii in Poliakov 307-14.
[37] Ehre 254.
[38] Lyngstad 146-47.

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from a rebellious to a dutiful daughter being hard to believe.[39]

Whereas Vera and Ol'ga remain the controversial figures in Goncharov's fictional world, the other female characters have received a generally uniform and favourable treatment. But while the more prominent figures like Lizaveta in Obyknovennaia istoriia, Agaf'ia in Oblomov, and the Grandmother and Marfen'ka in Obryv have all come in for their share of discussion, however brief, many of the secondary characters and the themes connected with them have been altogether neglected. The same can be said about the female characters in Goncharov's short works, which, partly due to the late date of publication for many of them, have until recent times remained little known. These works frequently include the social theme of the emancipation of women and the sometimes imperfect results which stem from it. To the best of our knowledge, even today there is no comprehensive study dealing either with female characters or with themes connected with women in Goncharov's works.

The plan of this dissertation is based on considerations of chronology and theme. The first chapter discusses the shorter fiction written at the beginning of Goncharov's career. The second chapter considers the heroines of the novels as well as the secondary woman characters who often serve on a thematic or a structural level as foils for the heroines. The third chapter is

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[39] Ehre 249.

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thematic in its organization, dealing with mothers and themes connected with parenthood. The fourth and final chapter discusses the shorter fiction written towards the end of Goncharov's career.[40]

Throughout Goncharov's long literary career the choice of female characters and themes reflects the evolution of the author's personal interests, his state of mind, his artistic methods, and also the changes in the world around him. His characters are always alive, and the author rarely lets didacticism lead him far from the reflection of reality in images[41] and the depiction of underlying, permanent character traits. What he says about the nature of character portrayal can be applied to his own work:

> Obshchechelovecheskie obraztsy, konechno, ostaiutsia, vsegda, khotia i prevrashchaiutsia v neuznavaemye ot vremennykh peremen tipy, tak chto, na smenu staromu, khudozhnikam inogda prikhoditsia obnovliat', po proshestvii dolgikh periodov, iavliavshiesia uzhe kogda-to v obraztsakh osnovnye cherty nravov i voobshche liudskoi natury, oblekaia ikh v novuiu plot' i krov' v dukhe svoego vremeni.[42]

With regard to social issues, Goncharov confines himself to the portrayal of representative situations and

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[40] Goncharov's travelogues Fregat Pallada, Dva sluchaia iz morskoi zhizni and Po Vostochoi Sibiri, first published during 1855-57, 1858 and 1891 respectively, will not be discussed in this dissertation. They contain only occasional sketchy portraits of female characters, such as the author's travel companions, aboriginals of places which he visited, or Russian women, including the wives of the Decembrists whom he briefly met in Siberia. When appropriate, references to the travelogues will appear in the notes.

[41] The idea that an artist thinks in images, first launched by Belinskii in his article "Idea iskusstva", written in 1841, was stressed by Goncharov (VIII, 69).

[42] See "'Mil'on terzanii' (Kriticheskii ètiud)", VIII, 11.

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representative female types without making specific recommendations. In this respect he seems to share the attitude of Mikhailov, who in his comments on the question of women suggested that if one could get more people to ponder over the problem, life itself would provide an answer:

> My ostavalis' postoianno v krugu obshchikh voprosov. Chastnoe primenenie ikh, ukazanie kratchaishego i luchshego puti, kak preobrazovat' sushchestvuiushchie otnosheniia, ne vkhodilo, kak ia uzhe skazal, v zadachu ètikh skromnykh zametok. Pust' tol'ko bol'shii krug liudei vnikaet v samye voprosy i trevozhitsia imi: otvet dast sama zhizn'.[43]

Upon reflection one can say that this attitude might have been the wisest, for truly perfect solutions are often impossible to realize and are accordingly dangerous to suggest. As an author Goncharov did his duty by putting the concerns of his day into an artistic and literary form which helped him reach the general public[44] and which also became a valuable record of the important social changes which took place during his lifetime.[45]

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[43] Mikhailov III, 430.
[44] Pisarev in "Oblomov," I, 16.
[45] See Maegd-Soep 151, who quotes a literary critic G. Korik who "rightly observed that Goncharov's and Turgenev's women characters allow us to follow, 'step by step,' the evolution of the ideals of the Russian intelligentsia as well as a good part of the history of the women's cause in Russia."

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CHAPTER ONE

WOMEN AND WOMAN THEMES IN THE EARLY SHORT PROSE

Goncharov's first printed contribution to the literary scene was not an original work, but a translation of two chapters of Eugene Sue's nove Atar Gull. This was published in 1832, a date which was commemorated fifty years later to mark the semicentennial of Goncharov's literary activity.[1] We should note in passing that several critics consider the only positive character in this extract from Sue's novel to be a young and beautiful woman called Mélie.[2] This is in harmony with the supportive attitude towards women in Goncharov's own works.

It has usually been left for modern scholarship to rediscover, publish, analyze and sometimes praise what are occasionally called his "literaturnye debiuty,"[3] his "early efforts,"[4] or some similar patronising term. True, these writings do not display the mastery of the later works. But for our purposes their intrinsic value is less important than their capacity to reveal an evolution in the author's

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[1] See Alekseev 254-56, 257-58 and Utevskii 245-46. Because of Goncharov's weak health and, above all, because of his personal desires, there was no actual celebration. A group of friends visted the author and gave him a gift on December 31, 1882. This visit was followed some time later by a delegation of Russian women bearing both a gift and a letter of greeting.

[2] See P.S. Beisov, "Velikii russkii pisatel'," in P.S. Beisov, ed., Materialy iubileinoi Goncharovskoi konferentsii (Ul'ianovsk 1963) 57-58.

[3] Tseitlin 30.

[4] Ehre 98.

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themes and technique. In this respect Goncharov's early prose is incomparably more significant than his few poems, which give no hint of the author's talent and can only be considered a literary curiosity.

Goncharov's shorter fiction appeared both at the end as well as the beginning of his literary career, while the novels were written during the middle period. Whether early or late, the shorter fiction displays certain thematic features, particularly in the treatment of women, which distinguish it from the novels. Whereas the male characters in the shorter fiction appear more like preliminary sketches for the full-scale portraits of the novels, several of the themes, motives and attitudes connected with women do not appear in the novels at all. In the shorter fiction, women are at times treated with humour and even with mocking irony, which strongly contrasts with their generally non-ironic portrayal in the novels. In one of the stories Chance and Fate play a major role in the heroine's life, whereas in the novels the heroines reject a passive attitude and always try to control their own lives. Some of the heroines of the shorter works belong to the middle class, while the heroines of the novels tend to be of the gentry. If they are of the gentry, they are always well off in the novels, while in the shorter fiction they tend to be displayed in straightened circumstances.

Besides the general distinction between the shorter fiction and the novels, there is, as will become apparent in

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Chapter IV, a further distinction between the earlier and the later short fiction, i.e. that written after the publication of the novel Obryv in 1869. The early short fiction depicts women in a traditional and unemancipated setting. It illustrates the various ways in which women cope with their position, which is so disadvantaged in comparison with that of men, and it tends to stress the dignity of women as human beings and their right to happiness. On the whole the author's attitude resembles many of the views which were common at the time among the supporters of the feminists.

The four early works to be considered in this chapter are Likhaia bolest', which was published in Maikov's handwritten Podsnezhnik in 1838, Schastlivaia oshibka, which appeared in Maikov's Lunnye nochi in 1839, Ivan Savich Podzhabrin, originally written in 1842 and first published in 1848, and a short work Pis'ma stolichnogo druga k provintsial'nomu zhenikhu, published without signature in Sovremennik in 1848.[5]

Likhaia bolest', a work that Goncharov wrote while

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[5] Another story, Nimfidora Ivanovna, which was published without signature in 1836 in a supplement to Podsnezhnik, has also been attributed to Goncharov. However it has never been included in any of the complete editions of Goncharov's works and there are still some doubts as to its authorship (for a sceptical view see the extensive note in Lyngstad 168; for a more positive assumption see Setchkarev 16-22). Nimfidora Ivanovna will not therefore be discussed in this thesis, though its portrait of a beautiful and courageous woman devoted to her ideals fits well enough into the gallery of Goncharov's women.

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still a beginning writer,[6] already displays a number of themes and motifs which further the image of woman as a strong and determined person who tries to make the best out of the little that life offers her, and who deserves a more varied and complete existence as a means to happiness. The plot of Likhaia bolest' does not have a real thematic opposition between women and men. All the members of the Zurov family and their intimate friends act as a harmonius group and share similar tastes. The unifying theme of Likhaia bolest' is the desire to escape from the restricted environment of the city and the need for activity and fresh impressions, shared, with only one exception, by all the characters described by the narrator.

For the women of the group the opportunity to go to the country and to break their routine looks particularly attractive, since a monotonous existence and a lack of new impressions is otherwise their usual lot, with which, at a suitable point in the story the narrator humorously sympathizes:

> Osobenno ia sokrushaius' za dam: gorizont ikh nabliudenii i bez togo tak tesen; a oni tut lishilis', mozhet byt', edinstvennogo sluchaia zapastis' nadolgo svezhimi i raznoobraznymi

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[6] See, for example, Tseitlin 41 or SetchKarev 25. The biographical background of Likhaia bolest' is the predilection of the Maikov family and their friends for long walks in the country and their love for nature, which inspired the author to write this witty burlesque about a family whom he named the Zurovs. The playful humour of the story has drawn the attention of critics, who concentrate mostly on the way the author pokes fun at romantic and sentimental attitudes, and accordingly at Romanticism and Sentimentalism in general. The story, nevertheless, also has a different, more serious meaning.

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vpechatleniiami. (Pravda, VII, 400)

Likhaia bolest' illustrates the ways in which all the Zurovs take measures to combat boredom, and in the course of the narration portrays several female types and the potential roles that a traditional woman can fill both in the family and in society.

To begin with, the Zurovs' passion for walks, their "sickness" as both the narrator and their lazy friend Tiazhelenko term it, can be indirectly traced to a woman. The Zurovs are supposed to have contracted it from one Verenitsyn who in turn, as Anna, Zurov's housekeeper, claims, got it from a woman of the steppes, a Kalmyk or a Tartar woman, who, according to a rumour sparked by the woman informant, might have bewitched him (P. VII, 392). This intricate and confusing web of gossip and witchcraft connected with women is interesting in two ways. Firstly it points to women as being the source of gossip and hence as being indirectly influential in society (a feature which occurs in Gogol''s works as well).[7] Secondly it suggests that the responsibility for what happens, for "the evil sickness," can ultimately be traced to a woman's influence. This is quite typical of the earlier works of Goncharov, where women manage to assert their will over others, particularly over men, without having any direct power. In Likhaia bolest' itself, however, this motif plays only a minor role and is confined in its appearance to the passages

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[7] For example, in Mertvye dushi, Vol. I.

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mentioned above.

The characters in the story include women of three different generations, the young, the middle aged and the old, each of whom suffers from the limitations peculiar to their respective age group. While each woman has her individual character traits, all the female characters in the story show the same boundless determination, optimism and stamina, and all are fearless in the face of unexpected mishaps, hardships or unconventional social encounters. In all, there are four female characters: the grandmother, Mrs. Zurov, Fekla (a niece), and Zinaida (a family friend).

In none of his other works does Goncharov offer such a grotesque portrait of a woman, and an old woman at that, as he does of the grandmother. She acts as a living barometer (P. VII, 371), her grandchildren make her miss her armchair when she tries to sit down (P. VII, 373), she opens and closes the curtains at the wrong time of the day or night (P. VII, 393), while she is sitting with enjoyment on the grass, some dogs pull off her bonnet (P. VII, 395). To enhance this satirical portrait, the author uses the elevated style of Old Church Slavonic when he mentions her only healthy hand (<u>dlan'</u>) (P. VII, 371). This humorous and disrespectful portrayal draws more attention than some of the other facts about this partially paralyzed and partially blind old lady. In her old age (she is said to be eighty) the grandmother is willful, clearminded and loving. She is eager to remain an equal member of the family, and she even

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insists on having her own little duties such as drawing the curtain in the morning (P. VII, 371). Moreover she succeeds in turning her major liability, her paralysis, into an asset and is eager to supply to family and friends the competent weather forecasts suggested to her by her ailing limbs.

It is not surprising, then, that the grandmother takes part in the country outings along with the other members of the family. There, too, she finds the means within her limitations to enjoy herself, "to sit on the grass and chew raisins." (P. VII, 385) And just like the others, she does not know how to use moderation. For after one of the walks, during which she had been looking at the sun (and undoubtedly enjoying it), she went totally blind (P. VII, 387). The author thus brings this old woman almost to the point of complete physical collapse. He does so, however, only to stress the idea that as a human being the grandmother still deserves to be treated as an equal. As he puts it in the words of the grandmother herself, the enjoyments of life should not be removed from her:

> - Zachem vy starukhu-to berete? - skazal ia vpolgolosa. - Ona tol'ko chto opravilas' ot nedavnei bolezni, da krome togo, ei by i ne po letam raz'ezzhat'.
>
> Starukha uslykhala. - Chto ty èto, batiushka, otgovarivaesh ikh brat' menia? - serdito provorchala ona. - Ved' ia zhivoi chelovek; chto mne doma-to delat'? (P. VII, 391)

Sure enough, the grandmother still appears as alert and energetic as before. At this point the author seems to speak not only for her, but for old people in general.

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The next character, Mrs. Zurova, personifies a society lady of the middle generation. Her home life is monotonous and is restricted to the routine duties of a hostess. Outside the house she is kept within the limits permitted by social conventions. She does not have any real contact with the life that surrounds her, the one that lies beyond the limits of her own social circle. In some respects, therefore, she remains naive and not that different from the younger woman. Thus, for example, the sight of a public eating house (kharchevnia) in the suburbs of the city is really new to her and she takes it for a candy store:

> ...Mezhdu tem Mar'ia Aleksandrovna, razgliadyvaia ot skuki okruzhavshie nas domy, vdrug ostanovila lornet na odnoi vyveske, i radost' zablistala v ee glazakh. - Akh, kakaia priiatnaia nechaiannost! - skazala ona, - zdes' est' konditerskaia. Posmotrite! My mozhem tam podkrepit' sebia pishcheiu i otdokhnut'.
> .....
> ... a damy ne znali, chto zavedenie pod etoi zamanchivoi vyveskoi byla kharchevnia, ob kotoroi oni ne imeli nikakogo poniatiia. (P. VII, 399)

For Mrs. Zurov the walks in the country mean an opportunity to get out of the narrow framework of her city existence. Although the reasons for her need for unrestrained activity are amply justified, they can only induce a boundless enthusiasm and cannot endow her with the necessary physical endurance. In her walks Mrs. Zurova shows all the necessary determination, but, as one can see, she has to pay for it later:

> Mar'ia Aleksandrovna lezhala na posteli i edva dyshala; podle nee stoialo mnozhestvo banochek i puzyr'kov so spirtami i raznymi krepitel'nymi i uspokaivaiushchimi medikamentami...

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-Akh, chto za mesto!- skazala edva vniatnym golosom Mar'ia Aleksandrovna i priniala neskol'ko kapel'.- Kakie vidy! Zhal' ochen', chto vy s nami ne poekhali. Kak inogda byvaet igriva i vmeste velikolepna priroda! Rasskazhi, Zinaida, - ia ne mogu. (P. VII, 389)

In spite of the humorous elements in this portrayal of Mrs. Zurova, the author shows an underlying sympathy for ladies of her type and class. Such women are at least dimly aware of their desire and their right to experience life to the full, and yet they find the fulfillment of their desire and this right is denied to them. The poverty of fresh impressions in genteel society, which the narrator had so casually noted (P. VII, 400), affects Mrs. Zurova most of all.

The two other women characters, Fekla and Zinaida, have problems of their own. They are both young ladies whose future is yet to be settled.

Fekla, Mrs. Zurova's niece, is a marriageable girl who appeals to the narrator to the extent that he considers marrying her himself. The narrator describes her as being sentimental and pensive, but when he sits by her side he speaks to her about the most prosaic subjects, such as mending socks or buying linen for men's shirts, a subject about which she seems to be an expert (P. VII, 372). From this it is clear that the narrator thinks of Fekla above all in terms of efficient housekeeping, for which she is indeed quite suited. Nevertheless, she too would like to sound poetic and express an admiration for nature like the other

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ladies. Once she even takes the initiative and invites others to follow her. But her choice of place happens to be particularly unfortunate, and her choice of expressions never rises above the most trivial of clichés:

> V drugom meste moia nezabvennaia Feklusha nashla okaziiu plenit'sia prirodoiu. - Vzoidemte na ètot velichestvennyi kholm, skazala ona, ukazyvaia na val, vyshinoiu arshina v poltora, - ottuda dolzhen byt' prelestnyi vid.
> Vskarabkalis' - i nashim vzoram predstavilsia zabor, sluzhivshii ogradoiu kirpichnomu zavodu. (P. VII, 393)

It is obvious that Fekla is not endowed with much sensitivity, imagination or individuality. Her tastes are modest: during the walks she aspires to down to earth pleasures, like eating butter and cream or picking berries or mushrooms (P. VII, 335). She evokes outbursts of admiration from the Zurov family only when she, unlike the others in their forgetfulness, brings some good wine and cheese to their picnic. At this point even Zurov's idle and apathetic friend Tiazhelenko, who happens to be present, makes a solemn pronouncement in her honour: "V pervyi raz vizhu dostoinstvo zhenshchiny i vizhu, do chego ona mozhet vozvysitsia." (P. VII, 397) In Tiazhelenko's, as in the narrator's mind, the virtue of a woman lies in her domesticity and her practical sense. Fekla represents the lowly image of a traditional woman, who is only concerned with the household and who remains satisfied with this down to earth vocation.

Zinaida, on the other hand, can be considered Fekla's

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opposite and in some ways is a forerunner of the heroines of Goncharov's novels.[8] She is imaginative, lively, fearless and adaptable. Thus, for example, to the narrator's surprise she brings with her to the country a pair of extra stockings in case of an outdoor mishap:

> Zinaida Mikhailovna dolzhna byla sest' na beregu ruch'ia i peremenit' chulki, kotorye kakim-to chudom ochutilis' v zapase. To-to predusmotritel'nost'! nu prikhodilo li vam, gospoda, v golovu, zapasat'sia kogda-nibud' v podobnom sluchae lishnim... Da chto i govorit'! Zhenskoe delo! (P. VII, 393)

Zinaida is also reasonably well informed, and her imaginative comparisons show a certain erudition about history (P. VII, 389), geography (P. VII, 390), and archaeology (P. VII, 393). One can guess that Zinaida owes all this inforamtion to her uncle, the professor, but one can also see that it strikes her imagination and appeals to her curiosity. Nevertheless in other matters she shows all the ignorance of a well bred girl, as when she affects ignorance about such mundane things as manure (P. VII, 390). Her open minded uncle does not seem to encourage these dainty prejudices, and unequivocally reminds her what to call it: "Navozom, moia milaia, - otvechal professor, - veshch' samaia prostaia." (P. VII, 390)

And yet the same uncle gives her a stern reprimand when, after a sip of sweet wine, she loses some of her good manners and, following an impulse natural for a young

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[8] See Setchkarev 112. The model for Zinaida is believed to be Iuniia Efremova, a niece of Mrs. E. Maikova, with whom Goncharov had a long friendship.

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person, begins stamping her feet and humming a Russian tune:

> ...Zinaida Mikhailovna prishla v neobyknovennyi vostorg; ona, vstav iz-za stola, nachala poshchelkivat' nezhnymi pal'chikami, pritoptyvat' nozhkoiu i veselo napevat' variatsii na temu: "A ia, molodeshenka, vo piru byla".
> - Pomilui! ty na nogakh ne stoish', moia milaia! - skazal ei diadia.
> - Da i ne vizhu v tom bol'shoi nadobnosti! -otvechala ona tak milo, s takoi ocharovatel'noi ulybkoi, s takim upoeniem v glazakh, s kakim by ia togda gotov byl... potselovat' u nei ruchku, da ne posmel! (P. VII, 397-98)

Here Zinaida shows the first signs of that independent, nonconformist thinking which later became the hallmark of Goncharov's heroines. She goes no further to break the rules of good manners and traditional discipline, but the reader can feel that the straightjacket of social rules to which this young and lively girl is confined does not leave her enough freedom or offer her sufficient opportunities to use her potential to the full.

The lack of personal freedom and the dependence of a young girl upon the will or the system of values of other people is one of the major themes in Schastlivaia oshibka. Unlike most of Goncharov's works, Schastlivaia oshibka has only two main characters, neither of whom can be considered thematically dominant. Moreover, as critics have noticed, verbal and structural devices bring out in a parallel fashion the symmetry between the character traits and

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actions of the hero, Egor Aduev, and the heroine, Elena Neilein.[9] The similarities between Egor and Elena, who are both physically attractive, intelligent and wealthy, do not preclude some very important differences. These relate above all to personal freedom. Egor is free to do whatever he pleases, go wherever he likes. Moreover he has complete control over the lives of his three thousand serfs. He is also free to arrange his own marriage and to get a woman of his choice to be his wife, since, as a wealthy and eminently eligible bachelor, he can count on the support of the girl's parents, who are the ones to take the real decision (VII, 431). Elena, on the other hand, totally lacks all these privileges and all this freedom. Thus within the limits of her house Elena is supervised by a governess, a red haired Englishwoman ("Podle Eleny sidela ryzhaia anglichanka i viazala sharf dvumia kostianymi spitsami nepomernoi dliny" VII, 437). The long, claw-like needles of the governess emphasize her control over the eighteen year old Elena, who is rarely left alone. It was only by accident that her duenna was called out of the room (VII, 431) and that Elena was allowed to stay alone with Egor, who, as a distant relative of Elena's father, had the privilege of being received informally.

An eventual marriage to Egor would not give any freedom to Elena either, since Egor, as the story shows, with his partly traditional, partly romantic, but always possessive

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[9] Ehre 103-104.

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views, expected his wife to have no life of her own and no interest beyond himself. In compensation, Elena would get Egor's admiration and love (VII, 442-43), and might possibly find happiness. As a married woman, however, she would not have much more freedom in the loving grasp of her young husband than she had had as a girl in her father's home. And freedom was not to be sought in social life, either, since society put its own implacable demands both on Elena's actions and on her personality.

In order to be rated highly by the members of her circle, Elena has to conform to the rules and the expectations which forced her to pretend to be different from what she really was. By nature Elena, as the author repeatedly points out, is a sincere, honest and affectionate girl, capable of deep feeling and endowed with a special "feminine instinct" (VII, 441), which helps her to discriminate between good and evil. But although the manifestation of her natural feelings and emotions is most becoming to her (VII, 445-46), in society she has to hide and suppress her true state of mind and develop social mannerisms, pretend emotion, and even suppress her Russianness.

Society as described in Schastlivaia oshibka does not in the least reflect typical Russian ways of the traditional past. According to Richard Stites, a general Westernization in dress, manners and mentality of Russian women took place

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after Peter the Great's reforms.[10] For a while the West, and particularly France and the courtiers and the courtesans of Versailles, became models for the society ladies of Russia. Moreover, according to Stites, "After 1750 Russian women delved more deeply into the trunk of European ways and discovered salon free thinking and the subtle flirtation -- zhenskaia intriga as it was called."[11] This aspect of Westernization was, however, shortlived: "The early nineteenth century witnessed a conscious attempt to reject 'French' values. With the rejection came a romantic idealization of the Russian women as the embodiment of Virtue and Maternity."[12] In our story this latter point of view is to some degree in line with the mentality of Egor. The mentality of high society at large, however, is very different.

In accordance with Western ways the heroine Elena is not called in society by her own name, but is referred to by its French version Hélène. She is criticized by a society lady for her proud and dignified bearing, traditional in a Russian girl, and for her Russian way of bowing in greeting. In order not to feel inferior to others she drastically changes her manner and very successfully starts behaving like an experienced coquette:

> "Ty ochen' mila, - skazala ei odnazhdy blistatel'naia dama, - no ne umeesh nravit'sia. Ty tak nepristupna! ot tebia tak i veet kholodom! odin vzgliad tvoi razgonit tolpu samykh liubeznykh

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[10] Stites 14.
[11] Ibid., 14.
[12] Ibid., 15.

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> molodykh liudei. Posmotri, kak interesno gliadit na tebia Ladov, kak privetlivo vstrechaet Surkov: vsiudu za toboi--suetiatsia, tolpiatsia okolo tebia; a ty krasnees' kak institutka, i klaniaesh'sia, kak popad'ia..."
>
> Popad'ia! Uzhaz!.. Elena akhnula.- O! postoi zhe grafinia! u tebia v lozhe budet prostornee!.. - Ne znaiu, chto dal'she govorila ei grafinia: tol'ko na drugoi den' podle Eleny vse vertelsia dvoiurodnyi ee brat, iunker kakogo-to gvardeiskogo polka, a na pervom bale posle razgovora ona do krainosti utomilas': ot kavalerov ne bylo otboiu... Tak i poshlo. (VII, 440)

Society does not only succeed in shaping Elena's personality, it also controls her actions. Thus if on a certain day she should feel upset, the fear of being condemned by society does not give her the privilege that a man has of missing a social function like a ball (VII, 445). Here, as elsewhere, Schastlivaia oshibka makes it clear that society requires from a woman complete subordination to its rules, even if this requires pretence. Thus, by pretending to be a coquette, Elena gains in the eyes of society and wins control and power over men, a fact which substantiates her claims to beauty and charm.

Pretence (pritvorstvo) is in fact one of the keywords and key ideas in the story, since it is by pretending that Elena nearly loses her whole life's happiness. Ironically Elena uses pretence and unnatural behaviour in self protection. But even when she loves and knows that she is loved in return, she does not dare shed her social mask for fear of disappointing society (VII, 441). While not yet making her as false and as corrupt as the other ladies of her circle or as her own mother (VII, 440), her milieu has

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nevertheless blinded her to the fact that in her relationship with Egor it is this very pretence at being a coquette which causes her the most harm. On the whole, however, Elena's precautions are quite justified, for even as late as 1858 the feminist Mikhailov wrote that a woman who does not use her koketstvo is often not considered by men to be a woman at all:

> Ne slyshite li vy chut' ne kazhdyi den' ot liudei, kotorye i sami schitaiut sebia razvitymi i nravstvennymi, da i drugimi schitaiutsia takovymi zhe, ne slyshite li vy ot nikh besprestanno, chto zhenshchina bez koketstva ne stoit vnimaniia, chto èto i ne zhenshchina vovse?[13]

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that Elena was slow to give up her pretence and her koketstvo, fearing as she did for her value in the eyes of men, even in the eyes of that man who she knew really loved her.

As seen from the story, Elena has every reason to try to keep her relationship with Egor, which for her is a real blessing. She is known to have no real friends, as even with her parents her relationship is only formal and they are nearly strangers to her. Moreover, when she quarrels with Egor she remains not only completely alone and brokenhearted, but feels that her whole future is threatened. Unlike a man, Elena is not allowed to arrange her life herself. Her future is not in her own hands but in those of her father, who, she fears, may choose to make a marriage of convenience for her ("Bog znaet, kto budet ee

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[13] Mikhailov 400.

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muzhem; mozhet byt', ona sdelaetsia zhertvoiu diplomaticheskikh raschetov svoego ottsa'..." VII, 441).

At this point in the story it becomes apparent that, after the quarrel, Elena has no one to turn to for advice or help, and that it is only as a result of a lucky error that she is able to give herself a second chance, to reverse her fortune and bring back the man she loves after having apparently lost him forever.

In this way it appears that in Schastlivaia oshibka the good fortune of the heroine depends not upon her or upon other people, but upon chance or upon destiny ("sud'ba" VII, 452),[14] or, as the test suggests, upon supernatural powers, which interfere for Elena's protection as a result of her qualities as a person and her foresight in tracing out a "magic circle" (VII, 440). But however one regards the circumstances that made Elena's happiness possible, it is clear that in this story the favorable influences on the heroine's life did not come from the society in which she lived and that she herself had little, if any, power to control her destiny in her attempt at achieving happiness.

The situation is different in Ivan Savich Podzhabrin, where most female characters do not live in obedience to the advice or will of others, and do not leave their wellbeing either to chance or to unknown powers, but actively try to improve their lot by themselves. However, they do not always

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[14] While Elena's chance encounter with Egor was due to a mistake (the blunder of a coachman who took Egor to the wrong place), sud'ba is only hinted at.

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use fair means to achieve this, and none of the four female characters in the story is a true heroine. If compared to other women in Goncharov's works, the three ladies whom Podzhabrin courts could more suitably be called anti-heroines. On the other hand, the young servant Masha, who also attracts Podzhabrin's attention, represents more broadly human values, and in any case plays too minor a role to be considered the work's only true heroine. Furthermore, she represents a working woman with values and qualities that distinguish her completely from the other three women. Masha will accordingly be treated separately.

Whereas in most of his works, particularly in his early prose and in the novels, Goncharov portrays individual woman characters in a favourable light and concentrates on their virtues and on their more gracious actions, the three ladies in Ivan Savich Podzhabrin all represent women of dubious value. Sociologically, however, the three 'anti-heroines' are in no way unusual, but exemplify various types which resulted from the unequal relationship that existed at the time between men and women. As a whole the sketches reflect a negative situation which, in 1858, Mikhailov discussed in detail in his article "Zhenshchiny, ikh vospitanie i znachenie v sem'e i obshchestve."[15]

It is well known that in the earlier part of the nineteenth century middle-class women, unlike their men, were expected to stay at home. They were not trained to do

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[15] Mikhailov III, 369-430.

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any work, and in fact the idea of working was often looked upon as being socially degrading.[16] All that was available to young ladies was a superficial, genteel education which only served to prepare them for a life of leisure and social activity. A woman had no alternative but to depend on a man for her livelihood, social status and comfort.

It is not surprising that, in the face of this dependent and inferior situation, women worked out their own techniques of self-defence. From their position of weakness they developed their own sly devices to attract, retain and efficiently exploit a man. This is how Mikhailov puts it:

> Ot zavisimosti (my èto vidim, k neschast'iu dazhe v nashe tsivilizovannoe vremia) netruden perekhod k polnomu podchineniiu. ... Lishennaia vsiakikh obshchestvennykh prav eshche pri vozniknovenii obshchestva, zhenshchina ponevole prinuzhdena byla pribegat' ko vsem ukhishchreniiam dlia priobreteniia sebe prochnogo polozheniia cherez soiuz s muzhchinoi.[17]

Goncharov's story, which preceded Mikhailov's article by a whole decade, can serve as an excellent illustration to the above: the three ladies Anna Pavlovna, the lady who is referred to as a baroness, and Praskov'ia Mikhailovna represent three different types of women, each of whom has her own methods of achieving her goal. Under different circumstances they could all be called practical, energetic and well motivated, but in the context of the story they are more properly termed calculating, persistent and unscrupulous.

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[16] Stites 30-36.
[17] Mikhailov III, 371.

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The reader is not allowed to know the circumstances in the lives of the three ladies prior to their encounter with Podzhabrin. At this point, however, one can see that they have each developed a strategy of behaviour which helps them win their desired position or reward. Each lady makes sure to project an image of herself which agrees with her physical or character traits and which will bring her the best results. Each employs a strategy which enables her to handle a man with the greatest efficiency. In the game they play they are not so different from Podzhabrin himself, who also has a series of tested devices to achieve his desired ends. It should be noted that in each of the three affairs neither party shows the least evidence of profound feeling or sincere emotion.

The first of the young ladies, Anna Pavlovna, who in reality seems to be a kept woman, is initially referred to as a kitten, kotenok, (VII, 18) and as a bird, ptichka, (VII, 18), and is obviously the female pet of her benefactor. Since she lives with an elderly woman, who acts as both her housekeeper and her chaperone, she has no duties or household occupations, however prosaic these may be (VII, 22). She seems to have no real interests at all, and the chance to watch a new neighbour move in and to inspect his furniture seems to make her day. Naturally the arrival of the young neighbour himself does not pass unnoticed either.

For a woman even less pretty than Anna Pavlovna, Podzhabrin was an easy prey, since his only intentions in

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life were to provide himself with the brief but pleasant company of young women. This preoccupation gave him a goal in life, a topic for conversation with his male friends, and a thrill which he otherwise lacked. In return he was, to those women who caught his fancy, courteous and sometimes generous, and although his exaggerated attention to young women at times provoked complaints from a husband (VII, 8) or from a father (VII, 8) the women themselves seemed to be offering encouragement.

For all of the above reasons, the desire of Podzhabrin and Anna Pavlovna to get acquained was mutual, and their friendship soon developed into a close cooperation. Each was perfectly attuned to the unspoken message of the other, a look, the sound of music, and finally small but meaningful gifts. The pace at which the relationship grew was steady, but in no way broke the facade of respectability.

One can see that on the whole Anna Pavlovna was an unassuming and pleasure-loving person who had to indulge in a continuous lies in order to maintain appearances and cover up her ambiguous social status. Thus she says that she is married (wishful thinking, perhaps) and that her benefactor is her "guardian and her...uncle" ("opekun i ... diadia", VII, 33). At this point in her life minor lies, innocent hypocrisies and role playing come to her naturally provided that they build up her image and improve her wellbeing. And yet she is not corrupt, and the ambiguity of her situation makes her feel truly uneasy:

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Vdrug kto-to chikhnul v sosednei komnate.
- Kto tut? - sprosil, poblednev, Ivan Savich.
- Eto moia khoziaika. nichego; ona mne predana.
- Akh! da... - skazal vdrug on, - dvornik mne govoril, chto u vas est' muzh... v komandirovke?
Anna Pavlovna vstrpenulas' i pokrasnela, kak makov tsvet.
- Da... bormotala ona, - ego poslali... nichego, on dolgo ne budet.
I zamiala razgovor.
- Kak zhe vy zhivete odni, bez pokrovitelia, bez...
Anna Pavlovna eshche bol'she pokrasnela.
- U menia est' diadia, on i opekun...
- On byvaet u vas?
- Da, raz v nedeliu.
- Nu, esli on menia uvidit zdes'?
- Nekhorosho, - skazala ona vstrevozhas', - ochen' nekhorosho. Osteregaites', ne [pokazyvaites'] pri nem. (VII, 29-30)

Anna Pavlovna is observant and tactful. She anticipates the sort of action and behaviour which will appeal to a man. She plays the piano for just long enough to attract attention: by stopping her music she indicates she is not an easy lady (VII, 23). With Podzhabrin she no longer acts as a female pet or a flower, tsvetochek, (VII, 30), but pretends to be a helpless, fragile and romantic creature of irresistible appeal. The trivial romantic clichés, which she seems to enjoy herself and which she uses rather appropriately, are in full harmony with Podzhabrin's own theatrical pose and they genuinely elate him. When he pronounces the decisive declaration "Zhenshchina dlia menia - èto sviashchennoe sozdanie...ia nichego ne pozhaleiu..." (VII, 29), Anna Pavlovna can consider that her game is won and she quickly responds.

She takes both parts of Podzhabrin's passionate

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declaration with equal seriousness and, all the while acting as a helpless and disinterested being, gradually acquires a fair number of valuable objects from him. One should note, however, that she never begs, and seldom demands (VII, 31). Her main allies are feminine weakness and romantic sadness:

> - Akh, bozhe moi! U menia net chasov: ia ne budu znat', kogda ty pridesh'. Chasy mne pokazhutsia vekami, a v zhizni tak nemnogo radostei.
> - I, moi drug, skazal Ivan Savich, - pomni, chto zhizn' korotka, po slovam filosofa, i ne grusti, a zhuirui. Da voz'mi-ka moi chasy stolovye: oni verny, - skazal Ivan Savich.
> - Da! a na chto ia ikh postavliu? U menia net takogo stolika. Ne vsiakomu dano...
> - Ty i so stolikom voz'mi. Avdei! otnesi! (VII, 31)

The acquisitiveness of Anna Pavlovna is not depicted by the author as a defect. She is only engaging in a fair exchange, and Podzhabrin is ready to pay for the pleasure of Anna Pavlovna's company for as long as she holds his interest (VII, 31). But not even her well chosen strategy can make his interest last, and in spite of what at first looks like mutual attraction, the couple is almost ready to part after only two months (VII, 31).

Structurally their separation is motivated by the unexpected appearance of the jealous and fat "guardian and uncle," who transports Anna Pavlovna to a new apartment along with all her recent acquisitions. This episode introduces a new motif, that of the hypocrisy and mercenary aspect of a "jealous man," a feature which was pointed out by Mikhailov, who claimed that what is called jealousy is in reality only possessiveness, and that material compensation

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removes the offence.[18] This seems to be the case with Anna Pavlovna's protector, and when cognac and cigars (VII, 36) are added to the furniture, the clock and the mirror, any problems are easily solved to the satisfaction of all.

On the whole, the narrator's attitude seems to be rather sympathetic to Anna Pavlovna, a young woman endowed by nature with a happy temperament and a pretty face. The comfort of her company appeals to men, but in spite of a well developed instinct for self defence, she has not succeeded in building for herself a full and honest life.

The second lady of the sketches is referred to as an aristocrat (znatnaia barynia) or the baroness (baronessa). These definitions reflect the image of wealth and distinction which she creates in the mind of some people, especially of Podzhabrin. Her real identity remains obscure, and her name, which does not sound very aristocratic, is mentioned only once (VII, 23),[19] considerably before the baroness herself appears in the episode. As far as one can judge, she is a very expensive courtesan of beauty and refinement who aims at the good life. But whatever she really is, she is cultivated and her manners in society are excellent. She is a good hostess and obviously works hard to keep the high standards which she has set for her image, one of refined luxury which, in combination with her social skills, places her high in the category of entertainers for

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[18] Mikhailov III, 408-409.
[19] The baroness' name is given to Podzhabrin by the janitor of the house: "...odna znatnaia barynia, inostranka Tseikh."

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the exclusive circle of her male friends. The actions of the baroness confirm her image, and when she receives her guests at home she acts as an exemplary hostess: "Litso, kostium, dvizhenie, gromkii odushevlennyi razgovor -- vse pokazyvalo, chto ona byla dostoinoiu presedatel'nitseiu pira." (VII, 54) The repeated metaphor describing her at this point is fire: "Glaza blistali ognem...rumianets pylal iarche." (VII, 54) Her image implies light, heat and danger. But if as a woman she is dangerous, professionally speaking she is a perfectionist.

Podzhabrin does not have the necessary qualifications to be considered among the baroness' close friends, but she mistakenly considers him to be wealthier than he really is (VII, 45) and encourages him with a smile. Podzhabrin is predictably impressed by the beauty of the baroness and by her aura of luxury. Their first encounter, however, develops into a business session in which the baroness easily succeeds in selling to him at a high price her old horse, which he had never intended to buy. In this encounter she comes out as a clever, unscrupulous and shrewd business woman. Her strategy is one of aggression and intimidation. The elegant setting in which she receives Podzhabrin and her haughty manner deprive him from the start of his usual self assurance and poise (VII, 46). In the course of the negotiations she cleverly interrupts him, impresses him and actually induces him to buy the horse out of fear of her. In accordance with her image, the baroness treats the money

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itself with perfect disdain, but once she has found in Podzhabrin a source of easy money she becomes more amiable.

His friendship with the baroness appeals to Podzhabrin not so much because of the lady's charm as because of her supposed nobility, which makes him proud and gives new dimensions to the fictitious and boastful stories which he tells his male friends about his private life (VII, 50-51). The pleasure of the baroness' company, which does not go beyond the limits of social encounters, (VII, 52), does not come cheap to Podzhabrin, for soon enough she borrows a big sum from him which she never pays back and which he actually had to borrow himself in order to lend it to her. When he later asks for the money back she shows real cynicism and laughs him off (VII, 59). She even turns the tables on him by claiming that he was the one who had not paid her a debt (VII, 59). It is clear that after performing two successful financial operations the baroness feels that by now she can dismiss Podzhabrin without regret.

The portrait of the baroness shows both the positive and the negative sides of this woman. Although she is shown as a person with no principles, her strong character and intelligence make her a person to be reckoned with. One realizes also that in her relationships with men it is she who controls the situation and that, in her case, it is the man who should be on his guard.

The last of Podzhabrin's lady friends, Praskov'ia Mikhailovna, is a very ordinary young girl, an orphan who

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lives in the company of her cook and housekeeper, and under the protection and supervision of her godfather, who is a very respectable gentleman.

Praskov'ia Mikhailovna is not favoured by nature and is lacking both in good looks and in charm. She is irritable, diffident and prudish. The image she would like to project is that of a perfectly virtuous and pious girl. Her tactic with men is to practice aggression in the guise of self defence. Praskov'ia Mikhailovna treats a man as though he were an aggressor, a danger to her good reputation, and an immediate threat to her virtue, about which she never tires of speaking. Nevertheless, she is willing to give a chance to a man like Podzhabrin, who is well off, as long as a modicum of appearances is preserved:

> - Akh! - skazala ona, - vy uzh i voshli! Kakovy muzhchiny! Vy, veroiatno, dumaete, chto ia rada, chto khotela ètogo? Ne voobrazhaite!
> - Pomiluite... osmelius' li ia? Ia tol'ko umoliaiu: ne lishite menia schast'ia...
> - Kak èto mozhno! Akh, gospodi! nachala ona, sadias' na divan. - Chto skazhut? pro menia nikto nikogda ne slykhal durnogo slova, a tut ètakoi sram: chuzhoi muzhchina v drugoi raz...
> - Skazhut-s... chto ia prikhodil uznat' naschet drov: ved' vsiakii dorozhit svoim spokoistviem... soglasites' sami, Praskov'ia Mikhailovna! - ubeditel'no pribavil Ivan Savich i sel.
> - Ono, konechno... - nachala ona, - pozvol'te uznat', kak vas po imeni i otchestvu, Akh! da uzh vy i seli? (VII, 65)

In accordance with the image of a perfectly virtuous girl, Praskov'ia Mikhailovna who claims to be close to twenty two years of age, refuses to hear absolutely anything which could be even remotely considered indecent. As she

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herself says, she refuses to listen to compliments, or to hear about the theatre, where modern plays might be lacking in seriousness, let alone talk about the possible dangers reserved for innocent young ladies in their relations with a corrupt man (VII, 66). As a rule, she has no male acquaintances at all.

And yet this affected prudishness disguises an acute awareness of sexual matters, as two minor episodes make clear. The first episode shows Praskov'ia Mikhailovna as she reproaches Ustin'ia, her cook, for buying a rooster instead of a hen at the market:

> - Ne khochu ia petukha: petukhi zhestki!
> - I net, matushka, ètot eshche moloden'kii, slovno tsyplenochek.
> - Ivan Savich reshilsia proniknut' dal'she. Poiavlenie ego proizvelo znachitel'nyi èffekt.
> - Akh! - zakrichala baryshnia, zakutyvaias' odnoi rukoi v bol'shoi zheltyi platok, a drugoi derzha petukha.
> - Ia-s... moe pochtenie... ia zhivu zdes' pod vami...
> - Chto zh vy, milostivyi gosudar', khodite po chuzhim kvartiram? - nachala ona, priacha pod platok ruku s petukhom. - Vy dumaete, chto ia bezzashchitnaia devushka, bez pokrovitelia, chto menia mozhno vsiakomu obidet'? Izvinite, vy oshibaetes'! Pozvol'te vam skazat': u menia est' komu vstupit'sia, ia ne pozvoliu... Za kogo vy menia prinimaete, s kakimi namereniiami?
>
> Ivan Savich perepugalsia. On zabyl, zachem prishel.
>
> - Izvinite-s... - nachal on, - ia... tol'ko prishel sprosit'... vot izvol'te videt'... mne... togo-s...
> - Chto togo-s? Na, Ustin'ia, kuritsu... Chto zh ty ne voz'mesh'?
> - Ved' èto petushok-s? - robko sprosil Ivan Savich.
> - A vam chto za delo? vy pochemu znaete?
> - Ia slyshal ot cheloveka, chto vasha kukharka oshibkoi kupila petukha... ne ugodno li pomeniatsia na kurochku?

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- Kakaia derzost'! - voskliknula baryshnia, pozhimaia plechami, - bozhe moi! Za chto ty menia tak karaesh? Kak vy osmelivaetes' govorit' mne takie rechi? Vy prishli obizhat' menia? Chto zhe èto takoe...

Ona nachala plakat'. (VII, 60-61)

As we can see, when a man is present, Praskov'ia Mikhailovna refuses even to pronounce the word "rooster" (petushok). In another episode, however, she herself much to the protest of a small girl, brings up a comb as an imaginary object: "Ty, ma chère, grebenochka, a oni budut chastyi greben'. Tak vy chastyi greben'." (VII, 70) If one bears in mind that a comb is traditionally considered a male symbol, one can see that the prudish girl Praskov'ia Mikhailovna indeed has her mind set on men. She herself, however, presents little interest to men, and Podzhabrin compares her successively to a bear (medved', VII, 63) a log (derevo, VII, 73) and later to a snake (zmeia, VII, 75).

As far as her excessive diffidence and reserve with men go, they are said to have been imprinted in her by her father, a stern and serious man (VII, 71). Her deceased mother, on the other hand, is referred to as balvonitsa (VII, 71), an ambiguous word meaning both "the one who is kind, who spoils," and "the one who is naughty, who likes to have fun." Without giving details, the author makes it clear that, had she been deprived of her father's stern education, Praskov'ia Mikhailovna's behaviour would have been very different indeed. Though there are many possible explanations for the father's role in fostering virtuous

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behaviour in his daughter, Mikhailov explained it as being due to the fact that it raised her value and made her eligible for a better marriage.[20]

The way things are, however, in Praskov'ia Mikhailovna's mind her friendship with a man should cost him not objects or money, but his freedom, since she is only willing to see it in terms of marriage, a union approved by both society and the church. And had Podzhabrin been somewhat more careless and had he not run away in time, Praskov'ia Mikhailovna with her godfather and his connections could have made it extremely difficult for him to avoid a forced marriage as the result of a rather innocent attempt to court her.

As seen from this sketch, the anti-heroine Praskov'ia Mikhailovna is a lady who lacks intelligence, tact and any sense of moderation. Her strategy is not the one that can lead to success, and the future looks very bleak for her. Because of her awkward handling of it, the one quality she had, her virtue, becomes a drawback and a burden instead of an asset and an advantage.

If one considers these three anti-heroines as a group, one can see that in their unequal and dependent position, which gives them no obvious power and control over men, they all resort to various sly devices (even virtue becomes a weapon to entrap a man), and are ready to fight tooth and nail for any advantages they may get in return for the

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[20] Mikhailov III, 410.

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pleasure of their company.

The preoccupations, high ambitions and excesses of the above ladies have no part in the life of the young servant Masha, the maid of the baroness. She represents a very different type of woman, not being dependent on men for her survival and wellbeing, but being herself a breadwinner, a fact which explains her independent character and her moral superiority to the other women encountered in Podzhabrin. She is a simple and natural girl without strategies, hypocrisy or ulterior motives. As an attractive woman she appeals to men, but it is clear that, unlike some who had worked for the baroness (VII, 43), Masha has no ambition at all to attract the notice of any of the baroness's fun loving and wealthy guests. In her relations with men she agrees to socialize only with her equals and refuses the attentions of Podzhabrin, who in her estimate is a barin. As Podzhabrin's servant Avdei reports later: "Chto mne, govorit, do tvoego barina za delo? On, govorit, mne ne rovnia: chto mne s nim znakomit'sia?" (VII, 39)

Only when Podzhabrin himself pretends to be a servant does Masha become more friendly with him. She is particularly impressed when he tells her that he is his master's butler (VII, 41-42). Masha, like other women, is rank conscious, but she limits her ambitions only to the sphere of her own social class. Like other women, too, she is quick to show a man that she knows her own worth, and she is not forthcoming at the very first encounter. Indeed when

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Podzhabrin, dressed like a butler, starts paying her compliments, she makes a menacing gesture with a hot iron: "On poslal ei potselui. Ona ulybnulas' i pokazala emu utiug. 'Kak zhe! ne khotite li vot ètogo? - skazala ona, - kak-raz obozhgu.'" (VII, 40) Masha, unlike her mistress the baroness, does not smile at an unknown man, but that does not mean that she is shy, helpless, or prudish, like either Anna or Praskov'ia. She does not rely on men for protection and, as a working girl, she does not depend on them for survival. Even after a certain degree of friendship has been established and conversation develops, Masha can still be relied upon to behave in a self-assertive and independent manner:

> - Vy budete zavtra tut? - sprosil Ivan Savich.
> - A vam chto za delo?
> - Tak; ia by pokurazhilsia s vami.
> - Budu, tak budu, ne budu, tak ne budu: sami uvidite! - skazala ona skorogovorkoi, i, kak myshenok, pobezhala po lestnitse, pochti ne dotrogivaias' do stupenei. (VII, 40-41)

As one can see, Masha relies only on herself and expects equality and independence in her relationship with men of her station, although she has less reason than anyone else to consider herself to be in a position of power.

In fact, as a servant, Masha is in a weaker and more vulnerable position than other women. She is subject to both abuse and unfair treatment (VII, 48, 53), and on a practical level she has to be satisfied with little. In the passage quoted above, Masha is compared to a mouse (myshenok), and soon after this passage a paragraph on chambermaids in

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general extends the simile. Chambermaids are said to be people who always chew and nibble at something and whose pockets are providently stored with bits of dry things to eat:

> Gornichnye vechno zhuiut ili gryzut. V karmanakh ikh perednika naidete orekhi, izium, ili polovinku sukharia, ostavshegosia ot barynina zavtraka, ili biskvitu, vafliu, zalog nezhnosti kakogo-nibud' povara. (VII, 42)

Obviously, chambermaids are supposed to be content with only crumbs. But, like mice, they sometimes help themselves to more, and Masha admits to freely helping herself to the perfumes of the baroness (VII, 42-43).[21]

As a relatively honest girl, however, Masha draws the line at taking money (VII, 43, 49). For her money is connected with personal pride. Hence, although she agrees to accept a small sum as a gift from Podzhabrin as long as she thinks he is a butler, she returns it as soon as she finds out that he is a barin. Masha, we know, is poor, and for her the money means a great deal, but she is not ready to accept it at the cost of compromising her pride. Podzhabrin himself has no such scruples, and is only too pleased to get the money back. This hardly speaks in his favour, even if he does later return the money to Masha once again, after she had agreed to renew their friendship.

Masha is a sincere and unspoiled person for whom the relationship with Podzhabrin has turned out to be against

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[21] In a similar manner Avdei helps himself to his master's liqueurs.

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her own good, since she has come to love him profoundly. For Podzhabrin, on the other hand, she remains an inferior being (tvar') (VII, 53), a servant, whom he takes advantage of as long as it suits him, and whom he disposes of in a nasty and ruthless manner as soon as he needs her no longer:

> - Ia bez vas zhit' ne mogu,- skazala vstrevozhennaia Masha, vziav ego za ruku,- ne khodite!
> -A ia bez tebia mogu! - serdito zakrichal Ivan Savich, otdernuv svoiu ruku.- Vot eshche!
> -Ia vas tak liubliu,- skazala ona robko, pochti shopotom.
> -Eto ochen' glupo - liubit'! - govoril Ivan Savich, namazyvaia golovu pomadoi.
> -Chto zh mne delta'! ia ne vinovata.
> -I ia ne vinovat, chto ne liubliu tebia.
> -Chto vy obizhaete devchonku-to? -skazal Avdei,- ved' i ona chelovek: liubit tozhe.
> -Liubit! - skazal eshche serditee Ivan Savich, zaviazyvaiaia platkom bakenbardy.- Vsiakaia tvar' tuda-zhe lezet liubit'! Kak ona smeet liubit? Vot ia baryne skazhu. Zachem ona liubit? (VII, 53)[22]

As one can see, it is the servant Avdei who speaks up for Masha and claims that, as another human being (chelovek), she too has the right to love. Avdei also tries to explain his master's unworthy behaviour to Masha. For shortly after this scene, in an attempt at consoling her, he says about those members of the gentry who think that they are the only ones who have feelings: "Eti gospoda dumaiut, chto u nikh u odnikh tol'ko est' serdtse..." (VII, 53) The irony of both this and the previous passage is that in the world of these sketches the people of the gentry (gospoda) are the very ones who do not seem to have a heart and do not

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[22] See also VII, 51. Podzhabrin denies any possibility of his feeling for Masha.

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display either the love or the compassion that would make them deserving of the name chelovek. In Podzhabrin only the maid Masha and the servant Avdei reveal a moral integrity and a heart that qualifies them for this privilege. And yet the author makes it clear that of all the woman characters only Masha remains a loser in her encounter with Podzhabrin. This is because, unlike the other women in these sketches, Masha in her simple pride refuses to employ any sly strategies and thus allows a man like Podzhabrin to take advantage of her, instead of taking advantage of him herself.

The emphasis on humanity as opposed to rank revealed in the treatment of Masha is one of the important themes of these sketches, and is subtly integrated into them by the motif of travesty. Travesty appears in the story two times: the first is in the transformation of the master into a servant, when Podzhabrin dresses up like a butler in order to earn the favour of the servant Masha. The second travesty occurs at a big dinner party given by the baroness when the male guests, including Podzhabrin, dress up like women. In both cases the new clothing obscures the previous identity of the person and gives it a radically new image. The master who dresses like a servant starts looking like one, while the men who dress up like women begin to resemble women, and at that women of a different social standing (VII, 39-40; 57-58). The motif of travesty is thus used in this work to obscure distinctions of rank and sex, and to remove the

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barriers which separate master from servant, man from woman.

In the light of what has been said above, it appears that in Podzhabrin the author wanted to judge the characters without partiality or prejudice either to social status or to sex. The characters Masha and Avdei have every right to be compared to everyone else, and in such a comparison they stand out in a very favourable light.[23] The human value of Masha and Avdei is reinforced by the fact that among all the characters in the story they are the ones who are shown to work for their living rather than leading an idle existence, or living off someone else. Their work gives them that sense of pride and dignity which is so sorely lacking in all the other characters.

As we can see from the discussion above, Goncharov's three earliest works all contain portraits of distinct female types and present themes related to the inequality of women and the narrow field of activity open to them. But the message and the didacticism of these early works is only implied, while the didacticism of Pis'ma stolichnogo druga k provintsial'nomu zhenikhu is quite open. Here the narrator champions a young and refined bride who, by marrying a landowner, is obliged to join her husband in his ancestral home and has to resign herself to life in the country and to what the author of the letters considers the husband's rustic and uncouth ways.

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[23] See Lyngstad 37-38. The authors have commented on the moral superiority of Masha and Avdei.

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The author of the letters is particularly concerned with two aspects in he private life of the landowner and his future wife, both of which are equally important. The first topic concerns the person of the landlord himself, his behaviour and his general attitude to his spouse:

> ...uzheli ty khochesh' postupit' v razriad tekh muzhei, kotorye na drugoi den' svad'by iavliaiutsia uzhe k zhene v kolpake, plisovykh sapogakh, v aziatskom khalate, s tsinicheskoi rech'iu, s slovom "mamochka", tak chto kak budto sami govoriat: "posmotri, kakoi ia urod: menia liubit' nel'zia, ia èto znaiu. Ty liubi drugogo, a ia oslepnu, budu tak sebe muzhem, kak i vse, podobnye mne".. Net, moi drug; sovremennyi muzh ne to chto muzh drevnii. Poriadochnyi, khoroshego tona muzh, iskliuchaia nekotorykh, chrezvychainykh sluchaev, budet vesti sebia v otnoshenii k zhene, kak i k drugoi zhenshchine. (P, VII, 82)

The idea of this passage is especially interesting since it goes against the traditional way of thinking about the institution of the family and against the principles of Domostroi. According to the old ways, once married, the husband no longer saw his wife as a woman, or as a human being, but above all as his female,[24] or his property.[25] He was not in the least concerned about pleasing her or trying to make her like him, let alone love him. It is therefore not surprising that, as the narrator in Pis'ma says, before long the average woman would let herself go, lose her femininity and, when not in public, stay with her hair in disorder, her neck uncovered, and her gown unbuttoned at the breast (P. VII, 78).

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[24] Stites 13.
[25] Mikhailov III, 407-408.

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The second topic of the letters concerns the importance of the setting in which the couple will live. THe author favours an elegant carriage, modern silverware, and the adoption of a refined French or German cuisine. He goes so far as to say that a cultivated and modern woman, like the landowner's bride, would never be able to adapt to the old-fashioned ways and would not even have the minimum of happiness:

> Ona prinadlezhala i budet prinadlezhat' k khoroshemu obshchestvu, nesmotria na tesnyi i skudnyi mir, ozhidavshii ee v dome roditelei, nesmotria na ozhidaiushchuiu ee temnuiu i neopriatnuiu sferu tvoego obraza zhizni. Chto ty gotovish ei? Ona zadokhnetsia v chadu tvoego byta. (P, VII, 81)

As one can see, the content of Pis'ma stolichnogo druga is openly critical and didactic, and although the letters are written in an affected and humorous manner, the ideas which they contain are serious. Pis'ma, therefore, add a welcome final touch to Goncharov's other early works in that they explicitly state their author's interest in the lot of traditional women and are directed against the old order of things, which was so badly in need of change.

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CHAPTER TWO

WOMEN IN THE NOVELS: THE HEROINES AND THE MINOR CHARACTERS

The main female characters of Goncharov's novels are not only major artistic creations, but also constitue the author's greatest contribtuion to the women's cause. They help to illustrate themes connected with the equality of women, and their strong and memorable personalities evoke respect for women as human beings and demonstrate that women are in no way inferior to men. It is not surprising that the main female characters in the novels are often referred to as heroines, although, since none of the novels have a woman as a central character, there are no well defined heroines on the structural level.

As one might expect, there is no complete agreement as to which characters qualify as heroines in this evaluative sense. For whatever the virtues and the determination with which the female characters conduct their lives, all of them, whether major or minor, display certain weaknessess, which explains the variety of response they evoke from the critics. As was mentioned in the introduction, Ol'ga in Oblomov and Vera in Obryv are the characters most often singled out as heroines. Nevertheless, there are critics who admire and even prefer the selfless Agaf'ia in Oblomov or Marfen'ka and the grandmother in Obryv, or Lizaveta Adueva in Obyknovennaia istoriia. In the latter novel the author

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himself has drawn attention to Naden'ka for her attempts at independence. All of the above characters are bearers of major themes connected with women, and for this reason as well as for their moral or ideological value can all be considered as female characters of primary importance and hence as heroines.

Besides the heroines, there are a number of female characters of secondary importance. These include a group of background characters such as mothers or other female relatives whose main function is to serve as educators of the young people in the novels. Since these mother figures share many points in common, they are discussed separately in the following chapter. The other minor female characters resemble the heroines in that they are seen as individuals who live out their lives against the background of their family and social milieu. Some have an independent function in the plot, while others only act as foil to the major characters. On a thematic level, however, they all help to develop and add variety to the themes connected with the heroines.

To properly understand the heroines it is necessary to see their relationships with other characters in the novels. Of these relationships none is so important as that with men. They are linked to men by ties of love, marriage, friendship or family, the most important of which is love. As Nedzvetskii says: "Kolliziia liubvi -- kak osnovnaia formoobrazuiushchaia 'pruzhina' goncharovskogo romana, tak i

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reshaiushchee sredstvo tipizatsii i èstetizatsii."[1] In such interactions with men the heroines reveal the dominant aspects of their personality: their mind, will and capacity for love.[2] Since in such encounters they are likely to gain superiority over men, it is in this aspect of their life that their claim to equality with men is most evident.

One gets the impression that the selection of personality traits with which the author endows most of his female characters amounts to a systematic refutation of the traditional charges used to justify a woman's inferior and dependent social position. Goncharov's heroines are logical, realistic, practical, judcious and strong willed, as opposed to the illogical, naive, helpless and subservient stereotypes of the antifeminists. The tendency to discourage any superficial, sex oriented discrimination is reinforced by the characterization of the male characters, who often display features traditionally connected with women. Thus the heroes of the novels are romantic, imaginative, volatile, inconsistent, non-productive and tender.

This tendency to deny distinctions of character based on sex does not mean that Goncharov shows that women and men are, or should be, alike in all respects. In contrast to some feminists, who thought that sex should be the only difference between a woman and a man, Goncharov pointed out

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[1] Nedzvetskii 11.
[2] Compare the turn of the century analysis of personality into the three divisions of "free will," "reason or wisdom," and "the divine faculty of love" by R.C. Moberly in his Atonement and Personality (London 1901) 219.

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that a woman is different. Her faculties of intuition, of compassion and resistance are more developed than those of a man. She has the capacity for a quicker spiritual growth and reacts more quickly and more subtly to the life around her. This, for example, is what the author says about Ol'ga in Oblomov:

> Tol'ko zhenshchiny sposobny k takoi bystrote rastzvetaniia sil, razvitiia vsekh storon dushi.
>
> Ona kak budto slushala kurs zhizni ne po dniam, a po chasam. I kazhdyi chas maleishego, edva zametnogo opyta, sluchaia, kotoryi mel'knet kak ptitsa mimo nosa muzhchiny, skhvatyvaetsia neiz'iasnimo bystro devushkoi: ona sledit za ego poletom vdal', i krivaia, opisannaia poletom liniia ostetsia u nei v pamiati neizgladimym znakom, ukazaniem, urokom. (IV, 234)

The strong personalities of the heroines of the novels and the powers of judgement, will and feeling which they are capable of showing have lead some critics to conclude that Goncharov uses the qualities of his heroines in order to bring out the weaknesses of his male heroes.[3] One could equally say that the weaknesses of the heroes help build up the image of women. Whatever the case may be, one should also remember that in Goncharov's novels neither success nor failure is decisive or permanent. As Ehre says about the novels:

> ...The pattern seems to suggest an interpretation of Goncharov's novels as repeating a story of systematic disillusionment, a fall from the ideal to the real. But we have also noticed a countertendency in the fiction: a rise of ideal conditions to replace those that have been rejected.[4]

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[3] See, for example, Lyngstad 54-55
[4] Ehre 265.

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The result of such vicissitudes is that, with few exceptions, the male characters are not allowed in the end to come out as losers, but are given new opportunities for achieving recognition, success and happiness. They are thus released from the aura of inferiority cast over them by their encounter with a superior female character.

On the basis of their individual traits, actions and philosophy of life the major female characters could be defined as either progressive or as traditional women. The former are nonconformists: their actions and opinions reveal a growing self-awareness and an independent attitude to their milieu and their relationship with men. It is in such women that the theme of equality is most apparent. The latter are conformists: they do not question the values of the past and they accept without criticism the existent order of society and the old ways of thinking. In all the three novels one can find heroines who correspond to both of these types. One should not, however, make too rigid a distinction between them. For Goncharov's heroines are above all individual human beings, and whatever their general inclinations, they are all affected in varying degrees by the influence of the past, attracted by the spirit of the new, or simply guided by their own whims. This is exactly what might be expected in a transitional period of growing social awareness, when new ideas are gradually making their way into the time-tested, old ways of life.

The transition itself is carefully staged, for in his

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article "Luchshe pozdno, chem nikogda," published in 1879, Goncharov described his three novels as a trilogy in that they represent three successive phases in a transitional period of 19th century Russian history, namely the three decades from the mid-thirties to the mid-sixties.[5] In accordance with this pattern the first novel, Obyknovennaia istoriia, whose action takes place in the thirties and forties, a period when the question of the emancipation of women had not yet begun to occupy the attention of the Russian public, portrays women who are only just becoming aware of the possibility of a happier and more satisfying existence than the one allotted to them within the rigid structure of traditional society. The later novels, Oblomov and Obryv, are imagined to take place at a later period and accordingly their heroines show a corresponding increase in their independence and their demands.[6]

In Obyknovennaia istoriia a woman's life is still fixed in a traditional setting, and the happiness of the young women in the novel is directly dependent on their marriage and their love relationship with men. However, without being

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[5] Goncharov VIII, 72 and 80. Critics have disagreed with Goncharov's definition of the novels as a trilogy. A. Mazon (257) has observed that the novels do not reflect subsequent periods of Russian history and that the female characters do not in fact represent three generations. Maegd-Soep disagrees with Goncharov about the similarity between Naden'ka and Ol'ga and considers Lizaveta Adueva to be Ol'ga's precursor, an observation that throws a mistaken light on the character traits of both Naden'ka and Ol'ga.

[6] N.I. Prutskov, Masterstvo Goncharova-romanista (Moscow-Leningrad 1962) 129, points out that although the latest novel Obryv describes the time prior to the emancipation of the serfts, i.e., before the sixities, its characters reflect traits of a later generation.

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openly non-conformist or independent, these women do not accept their lot passively, but make an attempt to gain control over their own lives and either win or retain happiness.

In Obyknovennaia istoriia, however, none of the female characters are successful in overcoming the difficulties of their position and achieving the happiness they desire. The author generally refrains from describing their ultimate failure and leaves open the possibility of a happing ending. Yet this possibility seems very remote, since none of the young women in the novel are adequately prepared to exercise control over their destiny. Thus in the novel Naden'ka, Iuliia and Liza all share a certain naiveté (nevedenie) and, while they act with resolution and even take risks in their relationships with men, they do not succeed in winning or keeping the men they love. In a subsequent article Goncharov pointed out in connection with Naden'ka that the spirit of nevedenie was the hallmark of the whole period: "...samyi moment epokhi byl momentom nevedeniia. Nikto eshche ne znal, chto s soboi delat', kuda itti, chto nachat'?" (VIII, 75)

The most progressive of the women in the novel according to the author; is Naden'ka,[7] Aleksandr Aduev's first serious love. As Goncharov points out later, she is no more a a girl acting as the obedient daughter of her parents

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[7] In his article "Luchshe pozdno chem nikogda" Goncharov twice pointed specifically to Naden'ka as being a precursor of Ol'ga in Oblomov (VIII, 76 and 78). This comparison is particularly helpful for the understanding of the complex personality of Ol'ga.

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("Ona uzhe ne pokornaia doch' pered volei kakikh by to ni bylo roditelei" VIII, 74), but feels free to take care of her personal life herself. By choosing on her own the men she loves, first Aleksandr and then the count, she performs, as Gocharov puts it, an act of silent emancipation (bezmolvnaia emansipatsiia VIII, 75) and expresses a protest against arranged marriages.

If one judges by the relationship between Naden'ka and Aleksandr at its start, one gets the impression that she was quite capable of efficiently looking after her own life, for she cleverly encouraged the love of the man to whom she felt attracted, whose admiration flattered her, and whose status as poet appealed to her ambition (I, 101). Her most appealing feature to Aleksandr was her strong individuality, the fact that she was different from the other young ladies of her circle, whose shapely figures and languid looks did not compensate for their dreary predictability (I, 64-65). By sudden switches from tenderness to cold indifference, from pensiveness to irritablity, from sensous intimacy to cold detachment or even hostility, she continuously teases Aleksandr's feelings and keeps him in a state of insecurity and hopefulness. Thus, as soon as she allows him to give her a kiss in the darkness of the garden, she immediately rejects him and gives him an unexpected shock which makes her new wave of friendliness even more appreciated by him.

> "O, kak chelovek mozhet byt' schastliv!" - skazal pro sebia Aleksandr i opiat' naklonilsia k ee gubam i probyl tak neskol'ko sekund.

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Ona stoiala blednaia, nepodvizhnaia, na resnitsakh blistali slezy, grud' dyshala sil'no i preryvisto.

-Kak son! sheptal Aleksandr.

Vdrug Naden'ka vstrepenulas', minuta zabveniia proshla.

-Chto èto takoe? vy zabylis'!- vdrug skazala ona i brosilas' ot nego na neskol'ko shagov.-Ia mamen'ke shazhu!

Aleksandr upal s oblakov.

-Nadezhda Aleksandrovna! ne razrushaite moego blazhenstva uprekom,-nachal on,- ne bud'te prokhozhi na...

Ona posmotrela na nego i vdrug gromko, zasmeialas', opiat' podoshla k nemu, opiat' stala u reshetki i doverchivo operlas' rukoi i golovoi emu na plecho.

-Tak vy menia ochen' liubite?-sprosila ona, otiraia slezu, vykativshuiusia na shcheku.

Aleksandr sdelal nevyrazimoe dvizhenie plechami. Na litse ego bylo "preglupoe vyrazhenie", skazal by Peter Ivanych, chto, mozhet byt' i pravda, no zato skol'ko schast'ia v ètom glupom vyrazhenii! (I, 96)

Up to this point Naden'ka's provocative behaviour is more the result of her character than of any conscious coquetry. Her truly temperamental nature is typified by the episode of the little bug which she first tries to hit, then pities it and saves it, only to finally kill it in pointless violence (I, 89). This episode illustrates not only her fevered mind and changeable heart ("um pylkii, serdtse svoenravnoe i nepostoiannoe", I, 87), her capriciousness, but also her tendency to pursue a goal and lose interest in it after she has reached it. It is typical that in her relationship with Aleksandr she feels a wave of sadness as soon as he tries to map out their whole future life together:

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-Net, Naden'ka, net, my budem schastlivy!--prodolzhal on vslukh.-Posmotri vokrug: ne raduetsia li vse zdes' gliadia na nashu liubov'? Sam bog blagoslovit ee. Kak veselo proidem my zhizn' ruka ob ruku! kak budem gordy, veliki vzaimnoi liubov'iu!

-Akh, perestan'te, perestan'te zagadyvat'! - perebila ona, - ne proroch'te: mne chto-to strashno delaetsia, kogda vy govorite tak. Mne i teper' grustno...

-Chego zhe boiat'sia? Neuzheli nel'zia verit' samim sebe?

-Nel'zia, nel'zia! - govorila ona, kachaia golovoi. On posmotrel na nee i zadumalsia. (I, 97)

Being an intelligent young woman, Naden'ka is aware of the needs of her own character, and the idea of knowing in advance what lies ahead of her for many years to come repels her. She is accordingly demanding in what she expects from a man: prestige, entertaining company, fresh impressions. Before long she becomes aware that Aleksandr cannot give her enough of any of these: as a poet he is unknown (I, 107), his company is predictable and monotonous, and the foreseeable lack of new impressions makes her yawn with boredom (I, 103). Not surprisingly, marriage to Aleksandr ceases to appeal to her and she is always trying to postpone the engagement even before she meets the count. In his authorial comment Goncharov emphasizes that a woman of intelligence needs to use her mind and that Aleksandr's excessive and jealous preoccupation with Naden'ka was bound to lead to a growing indifference in this lively young girl: "I ne mudreno: serdtse ee bylo zaniato, no um ostavalsia prazden. Aleksandr ne pozabotilsia dat' emu pishchi" (I, 104). With the initial freshness of their relationship gone,

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there remained nothing more for Naden'ka than the prospect of a joyless marriage and a monotonous future which she resents.

One should, however, be careful not to overemphasize Naden'ka's independence and progressiveness. After all, she tries to keep Aleksandr for as long as she possibly can without actually having to lie to him. In fact she never refuses him ("ia vam ne otkazyvala", I, 118) and it is he who drops the courtship after finding out the he is not loved (I, 124). Furthermore, if Naden'ka shows independence and courage in entering into a risky friendship with the count, her obvious goal remains the conventional one of a better marrage.

For Nadenk'ka the count represents not only a way of escaping a marriage she no longer desires but is also the source of various satisfactions, pleasures and impressions. The author specifically points out her interest in the count: "On byl dlia nee novost'iu" (I, 105). Her optimism in aspiring to marriage with this brilliant aristocrat is perhaps justifiable. The love and admiration of Aleksandr is, after all, a confirmation of her attractiveness. Her control over him, as well as over her own mother ("ona imela poslushnuiu mat," I, 90) could serve for her as proof of her power over people. After the meeting with the count she also fearlessly succeeds in controlling one of his horses which she is learning how to ride:

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> Ona khlestnula loshad', ta brosilas' vpered i nachala prygat' i rvat'sia na meste.
> -Akh, akh! derzhite! - zakrichala Mar'ia Mikhailovna, makhaia rukoi, - perstan', ub'et!
> No Naden'ka potianula povod'ia i loshad' stala.
> -Vidite, kak ona menia slushaetsia! - skazala Naden'ka i pogladila loshad' po shee. (I, 110)

Later Naden'ka speaks with pride about how the horse knows her personally (I, 119), a conviction that adds to her confident feeling that it is difficult to escape her power. In this way her own wishful thinking together with the social charm of the count prevent her from seeing the situation with clarity and questioning the real intentions of the count. "U nego ne mozhet byt' durnykh namerenii," (I, 125) she says naively when Aleksandr puts a disquieting though in her mind. But when, after almost three months of friendship, she realizes that the count has not yet expressed any serious intentions, even Naden'ka becomes aware of the uncertainty of her situation. But by then it is already too late:

> Pal'tsy u nei drozhali. Ona, vidimo, stradala ot ugryzenii sovesti i ot somneniia, broshennogo v nee slovom: "Beregites'!" Kogda priekhal graf, ona byla molchaliva, skuchna; v manerakh ee bylo chto-to prinuzhdennoe. Ona, pod predlogom golovnoi boli, rano ushla v svoiu komnatu. I ei v ètot vecher kazalos' gor'ko zhit' na svete. (I, 126)

At this point her sadness and remorse are easy to understand, for in Aleksandr she has lost a man who could make her a good husband, however dreary the thought might be, whereas now her future is uncertain, if not grim. In fact the reader is never informed about the details of

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Naden'ka's relationship with the count. All the author says is that they go out together for long rides in the country and that she returns home pale and breathless (I, 113). There is, however, a subtle hint about what might be happening later on, after Naden'ka and her mother move back into the city, where the count is again a frequent guest. While they are still in the country, Madame Liubetskiaia asks Aleksandr to check the locks on the doors and the shutters of Naden'ka's room in their house (I, 115). The suggestion seems to be that the locks and the shutters are needed if the count is to be kept out of Naden'ka's house and more specifically barred from the window that looks into her room. If this supposition is valid, Naden'ka has even more right to be worried, for in trying to be independent and progressive she might have gone further than she had anticipated.

The difficulties which Iuliia Tafaeva had to face were of a very different nature. Iuliia was a dreamy, non-realistic and nervous woman, whose naiveté and other deficiencies were the result of a stylish and superficial upbringing which prepared her for society small talk but which offered her nothing to stimulate the mind. Like the other important female characters in Obyknovennaia istoriia, Iuliia is not only beautiful, but also intelligent and capable of deep feeling. And yet her personality was not allowed to develop harmoniously. In Iuliia's case the author once again explicitly stresses the importance of knowledge

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and mental activity for a woman, without which the mind atrophies:

> Antraktov u bednoi uchenitsy mezhdu ètimi zaniatiiami ostavalos' propast', i nikakoi blagorodnoi, zdorovoi pishchi dlia mysli! Um nachal zasypat', a serdtse bit' trevogu. (I, 203)

As an escape from her non-stimulating existence, Iuliia at first found refuge in romantic dreams, but her illusions were quickly shattered by an arranged marriage to a stranger older than herself whose education was as superficial as her own. Therefore, when, as a young widow, Iuliia falls in love with Aleksandr, her personality has been corrupted not only by a wrong education but also by a wrong, tedious and loveless marriage. Hence her feelings for Aleksandr grow into an obsession that is overwhelming and out of all proportion. This time, it seems, Aleksandr has encountered a person for whom feelings are even more important than they are for himself:

> Iuliia liubila Aleksandra eshche sil'nee, nezheli on ee. Ona dazhe ne soznavala sily svoei liubvi i ne razmyshliala o nei. Ona liubila v pervyi raz - èto by eshche nichego - nel'zia zhe poliubit' priamo vo vtoroi raz; no beda byla v tom, chto serdtse u nei bylo razvito donel'zia, obrabotano romanami i prigotovleno ne to chto dlia pervoi, no dlia toi romanticheskoi liubvi, kotoraia sushchestvuet v nekotorykh romanakh, a ne v prirode, i kotoraia ottogo vsegda byvaet neschastliva, chto nevozmozhna na dele. (I, 119)

Before long Iuliia's love becomes an opium-like addiction (I, 205), of which she relishes both the joy and the torment. But Iuliia's addictive love changes her for the worse rather than makes her better as a human being. All the

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time she becomes more selfish, possessive, jealous and despotic, and although Aleksandr himself goes through a similar evolution, this time he is the first to tire of the relationship. The immoderate tightness of the circle of love and control within which Iuliia has confined him makes him suddenly miss his lost freedom, individuality and independence, so that quite unexpectedly he stops loving her altogether. In several ways the situation is the reverse image of the previous love story. But whereas in the past Aleksandr had been acutely aware of his fading fortune with Naden'ka, Iuliia is completely oblivious of Aleksandr's growing indifference and continues to make plans for their future together, a future which seems more and more rigid and threatening to Aleksandr. When Iuliia finally realizes that Aleksandr does not love her, her initial reaction is one of offended pride (I, 217), but soon enough she ceases to behave with dignity. Unlike Aleksandr, who in similar circumstances had reacted with composure and had neither reproached Naden'ka nor begged her for pity, Iuliia behaves in a demeaning manner. In an effort to bring back her happiness, she threatens, begs, indulges in humiliating promises, and finally has a fit of hysteria in the hope that Aleksandr will not leave her. She even goes through a physical tranformation, which makes her look ugly and all the more repellent to Aleksandr:

> Kto by uznal v nei krotkuiu, slabonervnuiu zhenshchinu? Lokony u nei raspustilis', glaza goreli likhoradochnym bleskom, shcheki pylali, cherty litsa stranno razlozhilis'. "Kak ona nekhorosha!" - dumal

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Aleksandr, gliadia na nee s grimasoi. (I, 218)

This last scene, in which she tries to recall her lost happiness, shows her personal defects at their worst. She may have a certain charm, and her helpless femininity may be appealing,[8] but her emotional instability, dependency and lack of dignity put her on a lower level than Aleksandr. Iuliia lacks the inner strength of most of the women in Goncharov's novels, and her failure with Aleksandr can evoke only condescension and pity. By contrast one can see that the defects of Goncharov's other female characters, such as excessive ambition, stubbornness or changeability are, like their virtues, indications of their innter strength and not of personal weakness.

In describing Iuliia's upbringing the author remarks that Pushkin's Onegin had at one time made a great impression on her. For a while she took Tat'iana as her model, and in her mind she even addressed the lines of Tat'iana's famous letter to the unknown man of her dreams:

> Ona vziala sebe za obrazets Tat'ianu i myslenno povtoriala svoemu idealu plamennye stroki Tat'ianina pis'ma k Oneginu, i serdtse ee nylo, bilos'. Voobrazhenie iskalo to Onegina, to kakogo-nibud' geroia masterov novoi shkoly - blednogo, grustnogo, razocharovannogo... (I, 203-4)

And yet Iuliia's superficial interests and her neurotic nature in fact bear little resemblance to Pushkin's great heroine except that, like Tat'iana, Iuliia had married an older man and, presumably, again like Tat'iana, had remained

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[8] Prutskov (39) found Iuliia feminine and charming.

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faithful to him.

Much closer to Tat'iana are two other women in Obyknovennaia istoriia, the young girl Liza and the young married woman Lizaveta Aliksandrovna Adueva (Aleksandr's aunt). These two women (who share the same name) recall Tat'iana at two stages in her existence: Liza recalls Tat'iana as a young girl in love, while Lizaveta resembles her as a faithful but unhappy wife. Such an influence on Goncharov accords with the author's own repeated insistence on Pushkin's influence on later writers:

> Pushkin kak velikii master ... dal nam vechnye obraztsy, po kotorym my i uchimsia bessoznatel'no pisat', kak zhivopistsy po antichnym statuiam. (VIII, 78)

We must, however, bear in mind Goncharov's proviso that Tat'iana belongs to her own period of history ("Tat'iana i Ol'ga kak nel'zia bolee otvechali svoemu momentu, VIII, 78). The characters of Obyknovennaia istoriia belong to a later period and accordingly display a more progressive mentality.

It is not surprising, then, that Liza, in spite of her strict upbringing and the watchful eye of her father, who often acts as her chaperone (for it seems that she grew up without a mother I, 248), not only falls in love with Aleksandr, but is almost seduced by him. She is beautiful and is also fairly well read (Byron is one of her favourite authors), and when, in an idyllic setting, Aleksandr acts the fisherman and looks like a romantic hero, pale, sad and disillusioned, he easily strikes her imagination. Although

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Aleksandr tries to persuade himself that he is not interested in her, he does everything to appeal to the girl and make her like him. He hardly speaks to her, which arouses her curiosity (I, 241), he dresses with care for his fishing trips which Liza joins (I, 237), he shows off his literary taste by giving her advice about what books to read (I, 241) and he even touches and later presses her hand (I, 242).

In this way during their casual but regular encounters Liza's attitude to Aleksandr undergoes a predicatable development from disdain for his coldness to sympathy and compassion, then to a desire to gain his attention, and finally to a trusting submissiveness and a real love. At this point one could say about her what Pushkin said about Tat'iana: "The time has come for her to love" (prishla pora, ona vliubilas'). For the reader who is reminded of Pushkin, it is easy to imagine Liza's feelings put into the words of Tatiana's confession to her nanny. This is Aleksandr's impression of her after a period of separation lasting about a week:

> On vzgianul na nee. Chto èto: slezy, smiatenie, i radost', i upreki? Ona bledna, nemnogo pokhudela, glaza pokrasneli.
>
> "Tak vot chto! uzhe! - podumal Aleksandr, - ia ne ozhidal tak skoro!" Potom on gromko zasmeialsia. (I, 245)

Unlike Tat'iana, Liza does not write a letter to Aleksandr (for one thing, she does not even know where he lives), but she does reveal signs of great restlessness and bewilderment

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and looks as though she has something very important to say to him. Only the presence of her father restrains her:

> -Zachem? govorite vy. Poslushaite...- prodolzhala ona. U nei v glazakh blesnula kakaia-to reshimost'. Ona, povidimomu, gotovilas' skazat' chto-to vazhnoe, no v tu minutu podkhodil k nim ee otets.
>
> -Do zavtra, - skazala ona, - zavtra mne nado s vami pogovorit'; segodnia ia ne mogu: serdtse moe slishkom polno...Zavtra vy pridete? da, slyshite? vy ne zabudete nas? ne pokinete?...
>
> I pobezhala, ne dozhdavshis' otveta. (I, 245)

When she sees Aleksandr the next time, again after an unexpected break of many days, she is more determined than ever to tell him a secret ("ia vam skazhu tainu..." I, 247). The reader is never allowed to know what the secret is, for when Liza and Aleksandr enter an arbour, trying to remain unnoticed and talk more freely, Aleksandr's senses run away with him. He embraces and kisses Liza, confesses that he had invented his absences to test her feelings for him, and fixes a rendez-vous for the following evening (I, 247). At this point, one can say that Liza has gone a step ahead of her illustrious predecessor, Tat'iana.

Whereas Liza's love for Aleksandr is depicted by the author as real, profound, pure and youthful, Aleksandr's attraction to Liza is only sensuous. Of this he is fully aware:

> Usluzhlivoe voobrazhenie, kak narochno, risovalo emu portret Lizy vo ves' rost, s roskoshnymi plechami, s stroinoi taliei, ne zabylo i nozhku. V nem zashevelilos' strannoe oshchushchenie, opiat' po telu probezhala droz', no ne dobralas' do dushi - i zamerla. On razobral eto oshchushchenie ot istochnika do samogo kontsa.

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> "Zhivotnoe! - bormotal on pro sebia, - tak vot kakaia mysl' brodit u tebia v ume... a! obnazhennye plechi biust, nozhka... vospol'zovat'sia doverchivost'iu, neopytnost'iu... obmanut'... nu khoroscho, obmanut', a tam chto? - Ta zhe skuka, da eshche, mozhet byt', ugryzenie sovesti, a iz chego? Net! ne dopushchu sebia, ne dovedu i ee... o, ia tverd! chuvstvuiu v sebe dovol'no chistoty dushi, blagorodstva serdtsa...Ia ne padu vo prakh - i ne uvleku ee". (I, 246)[9]

In spite of Aleksandr's good intentions of doing no harm to the girl, he leaves for his evening appointment in the arbour in plenty of time.

At this stage it is easy to determine two things about Liza as a character representative of her day and age. Firstly, she is a determined girl, who is sure in her own mind that she has met the love of her life and who is ready to do anything, even if it means acting in secret, to fight for her own happiness. Secondly, one becomes aware of how little prepared Liza is to take care of herself, and what dangers would lie in store for her because of her innocence and naiveté (nevedenie) were it not for her father, who is there to protect her and who, without telling anything to Liza, intervenes to send Aleksandr away forever in disgrace.

In this way Liza once again remains in ignorance, and the encounter with Aleksandr stays as a pure memory of her first real love. The patience, faithfulness and absorption with which she still hopes to see Aleksandr come back show that for her it has been a profound experience which she will never forget. Even the place where she used to meet

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[9] The motif of seduction, only hinted at in this novel, becomes a major issue in Obryv.

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Aleksandr seems dear to her. Love has given her a strength and emotional maturity which transforms her from a cheerful and friendly girl into a person who has known suffering. In her life it marks a stage in becoming a mature human being and a step away from that state of innocence (nevedenie) in which she has been living up till now. As her own father concludes, the whole experience "will teach her a lesson" ("èto posluzhit ei urokom" I, 249).

As we have seen, lack of experience (nevedenie) causes all the three young ladies whom Aleksandr befriends to make mistakes for which they all have to pay dearly. But they are not the only characters who find themselves in this situation. The two male characters in the novel, Aleksandr and Petr, are also in a state of uncertainty about how to behave and are groping in search of an identity and an ideology best suited to them and most conducive to success. The narrative makes it clear that the process of experimentation is not easy and that they, too, as a result of their own nevedenie fall into extremes and make mistakes for which both they and the people who surround them have to pay a high price emotionally.

The one character is the novel who does not fit into this pattern is Lizaveta Adueva. With her, the inability to achieve happiness is not due to nevedenie, but to the impossibility or inability of producing a change in her personal or social life. On the personal level she finds that she is incapable of overcoming the emotional and

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affective incompatibility between herself and her husband. At the time there was hardly any way on the social level to escape from the fixed pattern of life of a well-to-do lady which so dissatisfied her. The only possible way out might have been unfaithfulness to her husband, but Lizaveta is unwilling to compromise herself both out of sense of duty and a feeling of loyalty to her husband (I, 150-51).

Although Lizaveta conforms fully to the way of life expected of a woman of her class, she shows no signs of being consciously traditional. Nor, on the other hand, does she show signs of progressive thought, although the excellence of her judgement and her analytical mind place her ahead of all the other women in the novel. She is above all a person of integrity whose inborn virtues and harmonious nature cause her nephew to call her an "ideal woman" ("ideal zhenshchiny" I, 169) even if she herself more modestly defines herself as "simply a woman" ("prosto zhenshchina" I, 169). In fact there is some truth to both descriptions, the first emphasizing her exceptional qualities, the second pointing out those qualities which are common to women in general. In the final analysis she stands out as a superior human being who surpasses the other characters in the novel, be they male or female.

Lizaveta's personality comes out most clearly in her relationship with Aleksandr, since with him she is able to express her feelings and show her good mind without being either directed or restrained by her husband, Petr Aduev.

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The result is that she appears the unwitting opponent of her husband, for without imposing her will upon Aleksandr, she tries to have a good influence on him and outweigh or neutralize the influence of her husband on his nephew. In direct opposition to Petr's intentions, Lizaveta attempts to maintain in Aleksandr a sense of optimism and faith in himself. Unlike the uncle, the aunt admires Aleksandr's unusual sensitivity and encourages him to express his sentiments and emotions openly, without being ashamed.[10] In her view Aleksandr compares well with those men who try to live by reason alone, and in private life she considers a man's heart as important as his mind:

> Muzhchiny, muzhchiny! ... Smotriat, chto u cheloveka v karmane da v petlitse fraka, a do ostal'nogo i dela net. Khotiat, chtob i vse byli takie! Nashelsia mezhdu nimi odin chuvstvitel'nyi, sposobnyi liubit' i zastavit' liubit' sebia...
> .....
> ...Bednyi Aleksandr! U nego um neidet naravne s serdtsem, vot on i vinovat v glazakh tekh, u kogo um zabezhal slishkom vpered, kto khochet vziat' vezde tol'ko rassudkom...
> - Soglasis', odnako, chto èto glavnoe: inache...
> - Ne soglashus', ni za chto ne soglashus'; èto glavnoe tam na zavode, mozhet byt', a vy zabyvaete, chto u cheloveka est' eshche chuvstvo... (I, 157)

Although Lizaveta and Aleksandr are the same age, both being in their early twenties at the beginning of the novel, and although they see each other often and are close friends, there is no indication that their closeness threatens to trespass on the boundaries of friendship and affection between two relatives. Their relationship speaks

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[10] Compare I, 44 and I, 157 and 256.

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well for them both, and shows that as a young woman Lizaveta does not have any doubts about herself and is not afraid of being led astray by potentially provocative situations.[11] With Aleksandr she acts as a close and affectionate relative and a devoted friend. Nevertheless, it is stated in the novel that friendship between a man and a woman is never like that between people of the same sex. It encourages more indulgence, sympathy and warmth ("no chego ne proshchaiut molodye liudi raznykh polov drug drugu?" I, 147). As the author mentions in a different connection, such friendships usually involve an element of tenderness which borders on love (I, 241). In the case of Lizaveta and Aleksandr neither friendship nor affinity of character can eliminate the difference in mutual attitude which is due to a difference in sex. Aleksandr often appears as the self-centered and inconsiderate male, while Lizaveta is invariably affectionate, understanding and cooperative.

The expression of her good feelings towards Aleksandr is not limited to tender words alone but extends to intelligent and helpful actions, depending on what he needs at any given moment. Thus, when he feels hurt at the failure of his love affair with Naden'ka, she offers him consolation and shares in his grief. With regard to his literary ambitions she offers unfailing encouragement and goes so far

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[11] See Tseitlin 92, who quotes a contemporary critics in Severnaia Pchela as making ambiguous comments about the relationship between Lizaveta and Aleksandr, implying that Aleksandr missed the opportunity of teaching his uncle a lesson and that by doing so he perhaps even disappointed his beautiful aunt.

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as to pretend enthusiasm, realizing that, though Aleksandr has little talent as an author, his writings are for him a source of pride and self-esteem. When she feels that help from her alone would be inadequate, she asks for assistance from her husband, as in the case of Aleksandr's disappointment with an old male friend. In Aleksandr's subsequent affair with Iuliia (which results from the uncle's intervention), Lizaveta judiciously advises him not to be too hasty with marriage, advice that later on turns out to have been very wise. Nevertheless, in conformity with her role as Aleksandr's aunt, she does her duty and pays a formal visit to Iuliia. By doing this, however, she without realizing it arouses a wave of jealousy in Iuliia herself, who is amazed to see how young and beautiful Aleksandr's aunt is.

It is then, above all, through Iuliia's eyes that one is allowed to see Lizaveta not only as a relative and an aunt or a dutiful wife (zhena, as the uncle always refers to her), but as a desirable young woman who has the right to her own, personal happiness. Indeed, she is the kind of woman who is meant to inspire joy and love in a man. As Aleksandr once put it: "Vy, tochno, zhenshchina v blagorodneishem smysle slova; vy sozdany na radost', na schast'e muzhchiny..." (I, 257) Yet, although she is married, there is no man in her life who can either feel or express love for her. As a woman she is doomed to a loveless existence.

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This situation, which is the cause of Lizaveta's unhappiness and the feeling that she lacks self-fulfillment, is only indirectly due to the structure of the society in which she lives. Although one gets the impression that her marriage had been arranged and that at the time she only knew Petr Aduev very little (I, 150), she shows no dislike for him. On the contrary, as the author says, it would have been easy for her to have felt a profound love for him, if he had only wanted it ("...on odnim vzgliadom, odnim slovom mog by sozdat' v nei glubokuiu strast' k sebe; no on molchit, on ne khochet" I, 150). With regard to love, Petr openly and insistently discourages the expression of feelings in others and prides himself on his own lack of feeling.

Petr's attitude cannot be entirely due to his character, for earlier in life he had been a very romantic young man. Rather it appears to be the result of a self-imposed emotional discipline, a desire to be progressive and meet the demands of the modern age ("vek" I, 263), to be like the young people of the energetic new generation who have discarded feelings and emotions:

> Posmotri-ka na nyneshniuiu molodezh: chto za molodtsy! Kak vse kipit umstvennoi deiatel'nost'iu, èenergiei, kak lovko i legko upravliaiutsia so vsem tem étim vzdorom, chto na vashem starom iazyke nazyvaetsia trevolneniiami, stradaniiami... i chort znaet chto eshche! (I, 265)

Although there can be no doubt that Petr's opinion of his wife is quite high and that he is well aware of her

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qualities and her emotional needs, he tries to convert not only his nephew but also his wife to his own practical way of thinking. Furthermore, in accordance with his own sober and dispassionate approach, he treats her more like a business partner than like a woman he loves: he is the generous and efficient provider of comfort and a prestigious social status, while she fulfills the duties of managing the household and acts as spouse on social occasions. But as Belinskii observed, whereas some shallow women could be satisfied with the superficial happiness provided by the carefree and leisurely existence which Aduev offered his wife,[12] Lizaveta with her intellect and her spiritual and affective needs felt that her own life, deprived as it was of every feeling, was neither full nor rewarding, but utterly miserable.

> "No, bozhe moi! - dumala Lizaveta Aleksandrovna, - neuzheli on zhenilsia tol'ko dlia togo, chtob imet' khoziaiku, chtob pridat' svoei kholostoi kvartire polnotu i dostoinstvo semeinogo doma, chtob imet' bol'she vesa v obshchestve? Khoziaika, zhena, v samom prozaicheskom smysle ètikh slov! Da razve on ne postigaet, so vsem svoim umom, chto v polozhitel'nykh tseliakh zhenshchiny prisutstvuet nepremenno liubov'?..Semeinye obiazannosti-vot ee zaboty: razve mozhno ispolniat' ikh bez liubvi? Nian'ki, kormilitsy, i te tvoriat sebe kumira iz rebenka, za kotorym khodiat; a zhena, a mat'! O, pust' ia kupila by sebe chuvstvo mukami, pust' by perenesla vse stradaniia, kakie nerazluchny so strast'iu, no lish' by zhit' polnoiu zhizn'iu, lish' by chuvstvovat' svoe sushchestvovanie a ne proziabat'!"
>
> Ona vzgliznula na roskoshnuiu mebel' i na vse igrushki i dorogie bezdelki svoego buduara - i ves' ètot komfort, kotorym u drugikh zabotlivaia ruka liubiashchego cheloveka okruzhaet liubimuiu zhenshchinu, pokazalsia ei kholodnoiu nasmeshkoiu

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[12] Belinskii, 829

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nad istinnym schast'em. (I, 151)

At this point in her life, Lizaveta's dignified sadness, her secret tears, her sense of duty and her unbroken faithfulness make one think of Pushkin's Tat'iana.

But at the beginning of her marriage Lizaveta had been optimistic about her prospects for happiness. On her first appearance she is shown as a witty and determined woman, confident of her powers and showing no signs of submissiveness and inferiority. Except for calling her husband by his full name Petr Ivanych, she treats him with friendliness as an equal. But as the novel progresses and Lizaveta's efforts to arouse a response in him fail time and again, it is easy to observe a gradual deterioration in their relationship and a growing awareness on Lizaveta's part of her husband's indifference. It appears that for him any manifestation of feeling is weakness, and that conversely coldness is strength, so that even Lizaveta's efforts to approach him with affection are rebuffed:

> -Sila liubvi! - povtoril Petr Ivanych, - vse ravno, esli b ty skazal - sila slabosti.
> -Eto ne po tebe, Petr Ivanych, - zametila Lizaveta Aleksandrovna, - ty ne khochesh verit' sushchestvovaniiu takoi liubvi i v drugikh...
> -A ty? neuzheli ty verish? - sprosil Petr Ivanych, podkhodia k nei, - da net, ty shutish! On eshche rebenok i ne znaet ni sebia, ni drugikh, a tebe bylo by stydno! Neuzheli ty mogla by uvazhat' muzhchinu, esli b on poliubil tak? Tak li liubiat?..
> Lizaveta Aleksandrovna ostavila svoiu rabotu.
> -Kak zhe? - sprosila ona tikho, vziav ego za ruki i pritiagivaia k sebe.
> Petr Ivanych tikho vysvobodil svoi ruki iz ee ruk i ukradkoi pokazal na Aleksandra, kotoryi stoial u okna, spinoi k nim, i opiat' nachal sovershat' svoe khozhdenie po komnate.

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-Kak! - govoril on, - budto ty ne slykhala, kak liubiat!..
-Liubiat! - povtorila ona zadumchivo i medlenno prinialas' opiat' za rabotu. (I, 162)

In this climate of reserve, Lizaveta's own initial warmth dissipates, and is replaced by a steadily increasing irritation and criticism. Without openly complaining about her life, she expresses her disapproval in the form of rhetorical questions, in which she cleverly and accurately analyzes her husband's calculating and heartless approach to her (I, 263-64). Her most open opposition comes when, as a result of what Aleksandr considers his uncle's influence, Aleksandr decides to return to his country estate. At this point Lizaveta goes on what might be called a family strike. She not only locks herself in her room and cries, but also refuses to carry out her household duties such as giving orders to the cook for dinner.

This moment of mild rebellion is a turning point for Lizaveta. Although she remains a dutiful and devoted wife, on a deeper level she refuses either to accept or resist her husband's philosophy of life with which she has to live. Obviously having learned from bitter experience that he would not change, she becomes aware that she has no hope for the kind of life which would suit her better. Unlike her predecessor Tat'iana, however, she finds herself unable either to adapt or resign herself to her unhappy lot, as her apathy and physical deterioration show.

As a matter of fact, the indifference which she shows

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is in reality an extreme manifestation of that life without feeling which her husband had at one time tried to impose on her. Her tendency to withdraw into an ascetic way of life is also an honest expression of her disdain for the material satisfactions, luxuries and social occasions which created the illusion of happiness and well-being. On the other hand her exaggerated involvement in the dreary duties of managing the household shows that it is the only purposeful occupation which she has in her life.

In this way, while going through the motions of what is expected of her without protest or criticism, but with utter indifference, Lizaveta lays bare her true situation, which implies a life without feeling, without genuine pleasures, and without rewarding activity. It is indeed an unhappy life, and reflects Lizaveta's earlier comment that evryone has his own heavy cross to endure ("vsiakomu iz nas poslan tiazhkii krest" I, 258). But whereas in the previous phase of her life, when she still retained her optimism, she had tried to let the cross remain unseen behind the appearance of composure and determination, in this later phase she allows the reality of her life to show up honestly in all its meaninglessness in spite of the wealth of material advantages.

In a digression connected with Lizaveta the author notes the predominance of the spiritual over the physical in the beauty of Russian woman (I, 300). In his description of Lizaveta he particularly stresses the intangible and

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spiritual aspect of her nature, such as her voice (I, 139), her gentle touch and her profound look (I, 146), or the glow of her eyes that obscures their colour (I, 300). With women like Lizaveta the physical and the material count little, whereas the deprivation of spiritual nourishment can lead to a lack of desire to even remain alive. As Lizaveta says, "Esli cheloveku ne khochetsia, ne nuzhno zhit'...neuzheli bog ne szhalitsia, ne voz'met menia?" (I, 307)

At this point in the novel, in the course of describing the reaction of Petr, who suddenly realizes the harm which he has unwittingly done to his wife, the author openly speaks up in favour of women and reiterates the reasons which led to Lizaveta's unhappiness:

> Metodichnost' i sukhost' ego otnoshenii k nei prosterlas' bez ego vedoma i voli do kholodnoi i tonkoi tiranii, i nad chem? nad serdtsem zhenshchiny! Za ètu tiraniiu on platil ei bogatstvom, roskosh'iu, vsemi naruzhnymi i soobraznymi s ego obrazom myslei usloviiami schast'ia, - oshibka uzhasnaia, tem bolee chto ona sdelana byla ne ot neznaniia, ne ot grubogo poniatiia ego o serdtse - on znal ego -, - a ot nebrezhnosti, ot ègoizma! On zabyval, chto ona ne sluzhila, ne igrala v karty, chto u nei ne bylo zavoda, chto otlichnyi stol i luchshee vino pochti ne imeiut tseny v glazakh zhenshchiny, a mezhdu tem on zastavlial ee zhit' ètoi zhizn'iu. (I, 304)

From the above one can see that lack of love and lack of a goal for her ambitions or of any rewarding activity were the key factors to be considered in explaining her decline. In this Goncharov recalls those later feminists who emphasize the need for a purposeful activity as a prerequisite for a

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woman's happiness.[13]

It is common for critics to see Lizaveta's lot in a pessimistic light and to imply that for her the novel suggests no hope of a better future.[14] But although one might suppose that Petr's awareness of his wife's dissatisfaction and the resulting physical condition came too late to compensate for the previous mistakes and save her, the text suggests that for Lizaveta there is still a hope of salvation. The reasons for this do not lie in the proposed change of her own and her husband's life resulting from Petr's resignation from his job but, as the text shows, depend on Petr's own emotional transformation which comes about as the result of his own sincere concern about his wife. His words show growing signs of emotion, stress and impatience which replace his previous dispassionate manner:

> -Kak kovarna sud'ba, doktor! uzh ia li ne byl ostorozhen s nei. nachal Petr Ivanych s nesvoistvennym emy zharom, - vzveshival, kazhetsia, kazhdyi svoi shag... net, gde-nibud' da podkosit, i kogda zhe? pri vsekh udachakh, na takoi kar'ere...A!
> -Chto vy trevozhites' tak? - skazal doktor, - opasnogo reshitel'no nichego net. Ia povtoriaiu vam, chto skazal v pervyi raz, to est' chto organizm ee ne tronut: razrushitel'nykh simptomov net. (I, 299)[15]

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[13] Tseitlin (76, 79, 184) points out that in this early novel Goncharov avoids describing Lizaveta in such a way as to make her a social issue and that Lizaveta is here only a victim.

[14] See Belinskii III, 828, Tseitlin 79-80, Prutskov 55, Lyngstad 55. Setchkarev 72 considers that Obyknovennaia istoriia ends in a catastrophe. Francois de Labriolle, "L'échec dans l'oevre de I.A. Gončarov," Cahiers du monde Russe et Soviétique XVI, (1975), no. 2, 181-96, expresses the opinion that all Goncharov's novels end in a failure, a conviction which is not shared by the author of this thesis.

[15] See also I, 298: "Vot tri mesiatsa ne znaiu pokoia."

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In this way Petr's change of attitude, the hint that he is now capable of an upsurge of feeling, and the sacrifice which serves as proof that he is truly concerned, all combine to suggest the chance of an improvement in Lizaveta's lot. After all, in her case unhappiness was less the result of social conditions than of her husband's blindness and the unsettling atmosphere of a period of transition which raised the possibility of new forms of happiness for women without showing how to realize them.

All the women discussed so far are only at the beginning stage of self-awareness and self-awakening, and their aspirations to a happier existence are only tentative, but by comparison with those female characters in the novel who live in the country they seem positively modern and progressive. The country women visualize their existence exclusively in terms of marriage and the family, and have no doubt that this is all that life can offer them. The young Sof'ia, the object of Aleksandr's early and tender love, belongs to this category, as does Aleksandr's own mother (who will be discussed in the next chapter). In spite of the romantic feelings which Sof'ia evoked in Aleksandr, she was a very plain and prosaic young lady:

> Glaza i vse vyrazhenie litsa Sof'i iavno govorili: "Ia budu liubit' prosto, bez zatei, budu khodit' za muzhem, kak nian'ka, slushat'sia ego vo vsem i nikogda ne kazat'sia umnee ego; da i kak mozhno byt' umnee muzha? èto grekh! Stanu prilezhno zanimat'sia khoziaistvom, shit'; rozhu emu poldiuzhiny detei, budu ikh sama kormit', nian'chit', odevat', i obshivat'." Polnota i svezhest' shchek ee i pyshnost' grudi podtverzhali obeschchanie naschet detei. No slezy na glazakh i grustnaia ulybka

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pridavali ei v ètu minutu ne takoi prozaicheskii interes. (I, 19)

As one can see, Sof'ia's traditional mentality makes her believe that her duty and destiny is to get married and remain in every way inferior to her husband. It will be her point of pride to be his obedient wife and a busy mother of their numerous children. At the end of the novel one learns that Sof'ia has married a poor man and has had to live in difficult conditions. This, however, does not seem to have changed her attitude or her aims, since she is already the mother of five children and is expecting a sixth, (I, 271).

But not all country women are blessed with a family, a husband (however poor), or children. Those who, like the country aunt Mar'ia Gorbatova, are deprived of these advantages and had never married continue to think about the man who had, at some time in their life, given them a chance of experiencing the feeling of love and the illusion of being loved (I, 298).

For such women the object of their feelings is of major importance, since it is their only source of joy, emotion and purpose which they will ever have throughout their lifetime. As long as their loved one is with them, they never tire of expressing their love, concern and devotion. When the person leaves, as in the case of both Aleksandr and his uncle, the loving women not only accompany them in their thoughts, but try to prolong the time of their togetherness by giving or keeping objects which act as extensions of

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themselves or of the men they love. Thus Sof'ia personally embroiders Aleksandr's initials on his linen, and at the moment of departure she presents him with her ring and a lock of hair ("...èto moi volosy i kolechko" I, 22). Aleksandr's country aunt Mar'ia Gorbatova not only keeps the flower that had been picked for her by Petr Aduev, but also expresses the desire to give him a cushion which she had embroidered herself (I, 28-30), and for many years she keeps the love letter which he wrote to her as a young man (I, 310). For these women such souvenirs act as talismans to relieve the experience of past love and happiness which will never be repeated. It is not surprising that the uncle, Petr Aduev, who stubbornly rejects all expressions of love, is particularly adamant about the souvenirs and instantly destroys them whenever he sees them. In what Aleksandr calls "the tangible signs of intangible relationships" ("veshchestvennye znaki neveshchestvennykh otnoshenii" I, 45), the uncle senses a source of those very feelings which he himself most fears and avoids.

So far we have only considered women of the gentry or the middle class. But Agrafena, the housekeeper in the country estate of Adueva, who belongs to a lower class, is also important to the novel. As a serf she has no right to personal freedom and, for good or for bad, her fortunes are at the mercy of her owner, Adueva. Agrafena's relationship, therefore, with the man she loves, Evsei, who is a serf like herself, depends only partly on the quality of their

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relationship, since it is Adueva who decides whether they have a right to be together, must separate, or can eventually marry.

The mutual attachment between the womanly but temperamental Agrafena and Evsei derives much of its strength and stability from the very uncertainty of their situation, which makes them appreciate every opportunity they have of being together. In their simple way this couple seems to be the happiest of all the couples in the novel:

> Istoriia ob Agrafene i Evsee byla uzh staraia istoriia v dome. O nei, kak obo vsem na svete, pogovorili, pozloslovili ikh oboikh, a potom, tak zhe kak i obo vsem, zamolchali. Sama barynia privykla videt' ikh vmeste, i oni blazhenstvovali tselykh desiat' let. Mnogie li v itoge godov svoei zhizni nachtut desiat' schastlivykh? Zato vot nastal i mig utraty! Proshchai, teplyi ugol, proshchai, Agrafena Ivanovna, proshchai, igra v duraki, i kofe, i vodka, i nalivka - vse proshchai! (I, 4).

At the moment of separation, when Evsei is sent by Adueva to Petersburg to accompany Aleksandr, there is no verbal expression of affection or tenderness between him and Agrafena. In fact she behaves with exaggerated brusqueness and is even rude with Evsei. So when Evsei expresses a justifiable fear that during his long absence Agrafena might give in to temptation and forget him with another man ("lukavyi ved' silen..." I, 6) her own belligerent and contemptuous reply does not contain any declarations of affection. And yet she restores Evsei's confidence in her and reassures him of her faithfulness more effectively than by any number of promises:

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-Vot eshche vydumal! - nakinulas' na nego Agrafena, - chto ty menia vsiakomu naviazyvaesh, razve ia kakaia-nibud'...Poshel von otsiuda! Mnogo vashego brata, vsiakomu stanu veshat'sia na sheiu: ne takovskaia! S toboi tol'ko, ètakim leshim, poputal vidno lukavyi za grekhi moi sviazat'sia, da i to kaius' ... a to vydumal!

-Bog vas nagradi za vashu dobrodetel'! kak kamen' s plech! - voskliknul Evsei.

-Obradovalsia! - zverski zakrichala ona opiat', - est' chemu radovat'sia - raduisia!

I guby u nei pobeleli ot zlosti. Oba zamolchali. (I, 6)

Agrafena's rude attitude easily betrays the strength of her attachment, her sadness in the face of imminent separation, and her own jealously, which comes out only at the very last moment before Evsei's departure, when she puts her farewell gift into his bag (I, 23). Evsei, unlike her, bursts out with reassurances of his faithfulness to pacify his incredulous friend.

Agrafena is a common and uneducated women who does not try to express her feelings with grace or elegance, and yet their very strength wins the readers' recognition and respect. Unlike other characters in the novel who boast of their refined sentiments, the feelings of Agrafena remain unchanged during Evsei's absence of many years, and when the pair meet again eight years later they are incapable of restraining their emotions, even if Agrafena again tries to disguise her joy behind contemptuous and mocking remarks:

Uvidia Agrafenu on ostanovilsia, kak okamenelyi, i smotrel na nee molcha, s glupym vostorgom. Ona pogliadela na nego sboku, ispodlob'ia, no totchas zhe nevol'no izmenila sebe: zasmeialas' ot radosti, potom zaplakala bylo, no vdrug otvernulas' v storonu i nakhmurilas'.

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-Chto molchish'? - skazala ona, - ètakoi bolvan: i ne zdorovaetsia!
No on ne mog nichego govorit'. On s takoi zhe glupoi ulybkoi podoshel k nei. Ona edva dala emu obniat' sebia.
-Prinesla nelegkaia, - govorila ona serdito, gliadia na nego po vremenam ukradkoi; no v glazakh i v ulybke ee vyrazhalas' velichaishaia radost'. - Chai, peterburgskie-to... sverteli tam vas s barinom? Vish' usishchi kakie otrastil! (I, 275)

As a couple Agrafena and Evsei would not even know how to describe the feeling that keeps them together. But against the background of other, more sophisticated characters in the novel who savour, analyze or discuss the feelings of love, Agrafena and Evsei appear to be the only couple capable of a permanent, unshakable feeling of genuine love. Whether because of their difficult situation of dependency or because of their uncomplicated nature, Agrafena and Evsei appreciate the joy of each other's company more than any other characters in the novel. Without being fully aware of it, the two share a feeling of love in its purest human sense. Aleksandr's uncle's remark that not much has changed since the time of Adam and Eve (I, 72) applies particularly well to them. On a social level they exemplify serfs who are without sophistication but whose capacity for devotion and attachment places them on a level that is equal to or higher than that of the other characters in the novel. In Obyknovennaia istoriia, however, there is no explicit comparison between the feelings of the humble, unsophisticated people and those of the other characters in the novel. Such a comparison is only implicitly suggested by

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the theme of love in the episodes connected with Agrafena. On the other hand, in Oblomov this comparison is more extensive and constitutes one of the important themes of the novel.

In Oblomov the two major female characters, Ol'ga and Agaf'ia, are opposites in terms of character, level of culture, and their attitude to the man they both love, Oblomov. Of the two women Ol'ga plays the most important role in the plot, and accordingly her character is developed in greater detail. As a strong and intelligent woman she particularly attracted those critics who looked for a heroine who would not only be willing but also able to criticize and erode the old and ineffectual ways of Russian life. Furthermore, Ol'ga's image as a heroine was enhanced by her appealing features, her charm, talent and intelligence. Compared to her Agaf'ia seemed to act only as a foil to put the impressive heroine in a favourable light.

The real state of affairs, however, is more complicated, for besides underlining Ol'ga's obvious strengths, Agaf'ia also brings out her rather less obvious limitations and mistakes. Conversely, Ol'ga can be said not only to bring out Agaf'ia's own weaknesses, but also to draw attention to some of the virtues of her foil. In fact some critics suggest that in Oblomov it is Agaf'ia who is the true heroine, in that of the two women Agaf'ia is perceived

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to be the better human being.[16] In view of this it is convenient to discuss Ol'ga and Agaf'ia not only separately but also in comparison with each other.

In the course of the novel the author shows Ol'ga in relationship to two different men, Oblomov and Shtol'ts. Both these relationships have a profound influence on her personal development and her personality. Her rapid personal growth, which is one of the main motifs connected with her, had already been remarked on by Pisarev in connection with her love for Oblomov:

> Ol'ga rastet vmeste s svoim chuvstvom; kazhdaia stsena, proiskhodiashchaia mezhdu neiu i liubimym eiu chelovekom, pribavliaet novuiu chertu k ee kharakteru, s kazhdoiu stsenoiu gratsioznyi obraz devushki delaetsia znakomee chitateliu, orbisovyvaetsia iarche i sil'nee vystupaet iz obshchego fona kartiny.[17]

It would, however, be more accurate to say that Ol'ga grows through her relationship with Oblomov rather than through love, since love is only a factor that enters at a later phase of that relationship when she has already gone through considerable development. In fact the first turning point in her transition from a curious and mocking girl into a mature adult takes place before any feelings of love for Oblomov

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[16] Grigoriev (I, 422-23) considers Agaf'ia a better human being; L. Pacini Savoj, "Introduzione," Tutti le opere di Ivan A. Gončarov, as summarized in F.F. Seeley, "Oblomov," Slavonic and East European Review 54 (1976), 338, calls her "Oblomov's true wife;" Yvette Louria and Morton I. Seiden, "Ivan Goncharov's Oblomov: The Anti-Faust as Christian Hero," Canadian Slavic Studies 3 (1969), 39-68, consider that Ol'ga betrayed Oblomov (53) and that Ol'ga represents Eve whereas Agaf'ia represents "Divine Womanhood" (57).

[17] Pisarev III, 13. Also see Prutskov 107.

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have developed. This event occurs when, after singing in his presence, she unexpectedly discovers Oblomov's love for herself (IV, 209). This spontaneous declaration gives her the first indication that she is beginning a new phase in her life. Now she is perceived as a woman and can no longer feel free to sing for him again or behave as a playful girl.

One should remember that, at the time when Ol'ga and Oblomov first met, Ol'ga was still a young woman who, in spite of her good looks and talents, had received little recognition from men (IV, 196-97), mainly because she lacked the superficial sophistication and the coquettish ways of the other society girls and therefore put off young men. One of her few friends at the time was Shtol'ts, whose company she enjoyed and whose opinion she trusted. But Shtol'ts himself, as the author points out, only saw Ol'ga as a child (IV, 196), and the difference between them in age and maturity threatened Ol'ga's self esteem ("...samoliubie ee inogda stradalo ot ètoi nedozrelosti, ot rasstoianiia v ikh ume i letakh" IV, 196). Hence in her first encounter with Oblomov Ol'ga sang unusually well mainly out of curiosity to test him and see if he were still capable of feelings or emotion (IV, 214), and the need for appreciation and recognition made her turn to Shtol'ts for confirmation once she had realized the powerful effect of her singing ("Dovol'ny vy mnoi segodnia? - vdrug sprosila Ol'ga Shtol'tsa, perestav pet'." IV, 203).

At this early stage in her life Ol'ga's values are

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often defined by Shtol'ts. She feels an interest in Oblomov because Shtol'ts has pointed him out to her, and in her attempt to keep Oblomov entertained she is following Shtol'ts' directions. She also follows Shtol'ts when she prides herself on her ambition, which, as she explains to Oblomov when he notices this trait in her (IV, 207), is a quality and a power which dominates the will.

Although in their first meeting Oblomov admires Ol'ga and even falls in love with her, the author shows that he is aware of several aspects of her character which make him uncomfortable and which, as the relationship grows, take on new dimensions. He thus notes that Ol'ga is not only ambitious, but also sarcastic and vicious ("Ona -zloe, nasmeshlivoe sozdanie!" IV, 204) and that she does not have a kind, compassionate heart ("Esli u nei est' skol'ko-nibud' serdtsa, ono dolzhno by zameret', oblit'sia krov'iu ot zhalosti, a ona...nu, bog s nei!" IV, 199). He particularly remarks on her ambiguous attitude, and, both because of their placement in the novel and because they foreshadow events to be described later on, his words remove any certainty about Ol'ga's feelings:

> -Stranno! - zametil on. - Vy zly, a vzgliad u vas dobryi. Nedarom govoriat cho zhenshchinam verit' nel'zia: oni lgut i s umyslom - iazykom, i bez umysla - vzgliadom, ulybkoi, rumiantsem, dazhe obmorokami...
>
> Ona ne dala usilit'sia vpechatleniiu, tikho vziala u nego shliapu i sama sela na stul.
>
> -Ne stanu, ne stanu, - zhivo povtorila ona. - Akh! prostite, nesnosnyi iazyk! No, ei-bogu, èto ne nasmeshka! - pochti propela ona, i v penii èto i

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frazy zadrozhalo chuvstuo. (IV, 206)[18]

And yet, as we can see from the passage above, any lingering doubts and suspicions in Oblomov's mind, however well founded they may be, are immediately removed by the sound of Ol'ga's voice. This subjective impression, however, does not assure the reader as the novel progresses that some of Ol'ga's feelings are fully genuine and that they are not the result of self-deception. Later in the novel Ol'ga herself admits that she is a dreamer ("Ia mechtatel'nitsa, fantazerka!", IV, 382), a factor which may be responsible for how she behaves with Oblomov. For although her new relationship with Shtol'ts's friend offers her no material advantages, it does stimulate her imagination, encourage her ambition, and flatter her ego. She would not want to give up this friendship, even if she realized that such a relationship precluded the fun, jokes and teasing that mark their first encounter:

> Ona peremenilas' s nim, no ne begala, ne byla kholodna, a stala tol'-ko zadumchivee.
> Ei, kazalos', bylo zhal' chto sluchilos' chto-to takoe, chto pomeshalo ei muchit' Oblomova ustremlennym na nego liubopytnym vzgliadom i dobrodushno uiazvliat' ego nasmeshkami nad lezhan'em, nad len'iu, nad ego nelovkost'iu.
> V nei razygryvalsia komizm, no èto byl komizm materi, kotoraia ne mozhet ne ulybnut'sia, gliadia na smeshnoi nariad syna. Shtol'ts uekhal, i ei skuchno bylo, chto nekomu pet'; roial' ee byl zakryt... (IV, 211)

But Ol'ga takes a liking for those who like her and, as she

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[18] It seems only fair to mention at this point that, as Shtol'ts says (IV, 188), Oblomov himself has always been a bit of an actor.

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is the first to admit, she likes Shtol'ts because he likes her more than the others (IV, 207). Similarly, the passionate feeling which she discovers in Oblomov gives her a particular sense of pride and inclines her in his favour. Hence, when in the course of the subsequent meetings she becomes increasingly convinced of the strength of Oblomov's feelings, her imagination starts working and she begins to adjust to her new role as a woman who is loved. This role brings about a change in her, for in this new relationship she becomes aware of new challenges and unprecedented opportunities opening up before her and realizes that she can be not only the equal of a man but even the stronger of the two. With Oblomov she plays the leading role which she never had in her relationship with Shtol'ts:

> Ona dazhe videla i to, chto, nesmotria ne ee molodost', ei pri-nadlezhit pervaia i glavnaia rol' v ètoi simpatii, chto ot nego mozhno bylo ozhidat' tol'ko glubokogo vpechatleniia, strastno-lenivoi pokornosti, vechnoi garmonii s kazhdym b'eniem ee pul'sa, no nikakogo dvizheniia voli, nikakoi aktivnoi mysli.
>
> Ona migom vzvesila svoiu vlast' nad nim, i ei nravilas' èta rol' putevodnoi zvezdy, lucha sveta, kotoryi ona razol'et nad stoiachim ozerom i otrazitsia v nem. Ona raznoobrazno-torzhestvovala svoe pervenstvo v ètom poedinke. (IV, 239)

As one can see, an element of rivalry and the desire to triumph is one of the factors in her developing relationship with Oblomov.

Although one may suppose that Ol'ga has been attracted to Oblomov from the very start, in the early stage of the relationship she is guided more by reason and imagination

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than by passion. She shows no strong emotions and identifies herself with an ideal image of eternal faithfulness, expressing her love for Oblomov in terms of duty:

> -Umrete... vy, - s zapinkoi prodolzhala ona, - ia budu nosit' vechnyi traur po vas i nikogda bolee ne ulybnus' v zhizni. Poliubite druguiu - roptat', proklinat' ne stanu, a pro sebia pozhelaiu vam schast'ia...Dlia menia liubov' èta - vse ravno chto...zhizn', a zhizn'...
>
> Ona iskala vyrazheniia.
>
> -Chto zh zhizn', po-vashemu? - sprosil Oblomov.
>
> -Zhizn' - dolg, obiazannost', sledovatel'no liubov' - tozhe dolg: mne kak budto bog poslal ee, - doskazala ona, podniav glaza k nebu, i velel liubit'.
>
> -Kordeliia! - vslukh proizness Oblomov. (IV, 251)

Ol'ga's words and her attitude at this point have the air more of an acquired truth or even a pose than of a deeply held conviction. Whatever the inference, here again her approach resembles that of Shtol'ts, who, as the author says, saw life as a duty, with love being the moving power (IV, 461). But whatever the depth or the origin of Ol'ga's intentions, they are altruistic and are directed towards goodness, love and the development of both Oblomov and herself. Moreover, as long as Ol'ga feels admired and can get due recognition for her role as a strong woman, she feels the incentive to conform to the image of perfection which Oblomov, the man who loves her, has of her and to bring out the best aspects of his and her own nature:

> Ona odevala izliianiia serdtsa v te kraski, kakimi gorelo ee voobrazhenie v nastoiashchii moment, i verovala, chto oni verny prirode, i speshila v nevinnom i bessoznatel'nom koketstve iavit'sia v prekrasnom ubore pered glazami svoego druga...

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> ...Ol'ga ne spravlialas', podniment li strastnyi drug ee perchatku, esli b ona brosila ee v past' ko l'vu, brositsia li dlia nee v bezdnu, lish' by ona videla simptomy ètoi strasti, lish' by on ostavalsia veren idealu muzhchiny, prosypaiushchegosia chrez nee k zhizni, lish' by ot lucha ee vzgliada. ot ee ulybki gorel ogon' bodrosti v nem i on ne perestaval by videt' v nei tsel' zhizni. (IV, 254)

But this climate of admiration and love spread by Oblomov causes yet another transformation in Ol'ga. If at an earlier stage of the relationship her judicious attitude to Oblomov had the appearance of a freely assumed role, at this later stage her awakening sensuality and her spontaneous reactions betray the beginnings of real love. Not that she ever really loses control. For she is aware of the dangers that Oblomov now presents to her as the object of sensuous attraction, and she is the one to forbid as much as a single kiss. If she takes minor risks to her reputation by appearing in Oblomov's company, she is always careful to keep up appearances.[19]

Nevertheless, when not observed by strangers Ol'ga behaves as a young woman who is sincerely in love. Unlike the earlier days, as she herself and the author say, she thinks with obsession about Oblomov, cries, sleeps poorly and, on those occasions when she hopes to see him at home,

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[19] Although the author, probably from Oblomov's point of view, suggests that Ol'ga is not capable of low cunning (khitrost' IV, 270), he states, now certainly speaking in his own voice, that she is capable of a certain measure of slyness (lukavstvo 354). Thus she does not look at Oblomov in public, even when she wants to (354), escapes from home only with a decent excuse, of which she feels proud (341), and wears a veil for an appointment in Letnii sad (338).

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behaves in a youthful and temperamental manner.[20] Moreover, when he does not come to see her at home, she makes an appointment with him in Letnii sad and, using a sly trick to escape, breaks all etiquette and to Oblomov's surprise comes to the appointment without a chaperone:

> - Kak ia rada, chto ty prishel, - govorila ona, ne otvechaia na ego vopros, - ia dumala, chto ty ne pridesh', nachinala boiat'sia!
> - Kak ty siuda, kakim obrazom? - sprashival on, rasteriavshis'.
> - Ostav'; chto za delo, chto za rassprosy? Eto skuchno! Ia khotela videt' tebia i prishla - vot i vse!
> Ona krepko pozhimala emu ruku i veselo, bezzabotno smotrela na nego, tak iavno i otkryto naslazhdaias' ukradennym u sud'by mgnoveniem, chto emu dazhe zavidno stalo, chto on ne razdeliaet ee igrivogo nastroeniia. Kak, odnakozh, ni byl on ozabochen, no ne mog ne zabyt'sia na minutu, uvidia litso ee, lishennoe toi sosredotochennoi mysli, kotoraia igrala ee broviami, vlivaias' v skladku na lbu; teper' ona iavlialas' bez ètoi ne raz smushchavshei ego chudnoi zrelosti v chertakh.
> V èti minuty litso ee dyshalo takoiu detskoiu doverchivost'iu k sud'be, k schast'iu, k nemu... Ona byla ochen' mila. (IV, 339)

As one can see, at this period in her life Ol'ga feels happy and carefree and is unimpeded by the need to appear judicious, reasonable, or concerned for her self image. In this later phase her love for Oblomov has reached its peak. As the author relates, a few days later even the minor details connected with her secret meeting with Oblomov seem dear to her:

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[20] Whereas in the earlier period Ol'ga had commented with pride on her lack of emotions due to love (IV, 251), at a later stage she admits to new feelings (IV, 251, 265, and cf. 286, 335, 348, 352, 355).

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- Poedemte, ma tante, zavtra v Smol'nyi, k obedne, - prosila ona.

Tetka prishchurilas' nemnogo, podumala, potom skazala:

- Pozhalui; tol'ko kakaia dal', ma chère! Chto èto tebe vzdumalos' zimoi!

A Ol'ge vzdumalos' tol'ko potomu, chto Oblomov ukazal ei ètu tserkov' s reki, i ei zakhotelos' pomolit'sia v nei... o tom, chtob on byl zdorov, chtob liubil ee, chtob byl schastliv eiu, chtob...èta nereshitel'nost', neizvestnost' skoree konchilas'... Bednaia Ol'ga! (IV, 352-53)

If at some moments in their relationship one could say that Ol'ga's will could temporarily infect Oblomov and induce him into unaccustomed activity, at this stage in Ol'ga's feeling for him one could equally say that Oblomov's love for Ol'ga had temporarily infected her and led her for the moment to put reason behind emotion.

A new turn of events, however, soon restores the primacy of reason. For although Oblomov loves Ol'ga as much as before, the manifestations of his love for her undergo a change. A mixture of external factors such as distance and internal factors such as fear for her reputation and his own indecisive character prevent him from wishing to see Ol'ga. When he once again, under a false pretext, misses a promised visit, Ol'ga repeats her decisive action of the past and comes to visit him herself in his own house.

During this encounter Ol'ga's happy and carefree state of mind has disappeared. Moreover, when she finds out that Oblomov had not been ill but had lied to her and that he had regressed to his lazy habits of old, she becomes all the more inquisitorial, suspicious and detached and addresses

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Oblomov with sternness:

> - Ty spal posle obeda, - skazala ona tak polozhitel'no, chto posle minutnogo kolebaniia on tikho otvechal:
> - Spal...
> - Zachem zhe?
> - Chtob ne zamechat' vremeni: tebia ne bylo so mnoi, Ol'ga, i zhizn' skuchna, nesnosna bez tebia...
> On ostanovilsia, a ona strogo gliadela na nego.
> - Il'ia! - ser'ezno zagovorila ona. - Pomnish', v parke, kogda ty skazal, chto v tebe zagorelas' zhizn', uverial, chto ia - ideal tvoei zhizni, tvoi ideal, vzial menia za ruku i skazal, chto ona tvoia, - pomnish, kak ia dala tebe soglasie?
> - Da razve mozhno èto zabyt'? Razve èto ne perevernulo vsiu moiu zhizn'? Ty ne vidish, kak ia schastliv?
> - Net ne vizhu; ty obmanul menia, - kholodno skazala ona, - ty opiat' opuskaesh' sia... (IV, 361)

Although during this visit Oblomov's gentleness helps restore some of Ol'ga's lost kindness, her sad, pensive sigh reveals her growing impatience and dissatisfaction. Once again her reason begins to interfere with her feeling, for in order to love him she has to believe in the sincerity of his love, and to do this she needs to see his love expressed not only in word but also in deed. When, in one of their next meetings, Ol'ga is seriously convinced that such a proof will neve come, she terminates both her love relationship and her unofficial engagement.

This willful decision on Ol'ga's part was responsible for some critics calling her calculating.[21] Others, however, argue that she never really loved Oblomov,[22]

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[21] See, for example, Pisarev III, 247-48. Cf. also V.S. Pritchett, The Living Novel (London, 1946), 403.
[22] See N.K. Mikhailovskii as cited in Tsetlin 465. Pacini Savoj (339) states that "Ol'ga loves nothing but her own pride...Such lovers do not really love. They are not even

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or that in Ol'ga's own words it was only "the future Oblomov" who caught her fancy.[23] On the other hand some female readers of the time expressed sympathy for Ol'ga's disappointment in the man she loved.[24] But the real situation is more complex than either Ol'ga's supporters or her detractors are ready to admit. Ol'ga and Oblomov both love and appreciate each other for what they are, or seem to be. But for Ol'ga a relationship to be successful has to be dynamic, goal-oriented and rewarding. It is wrong to assume that the "future," reformed Oblomov (if that were possible) would have appealed to her. She would have been bored with him. What she liked to deal with was the situation at hand and the real Oblomov. He was a passive man, she was a strong woman. Hence her particular disenchantment when she realizes that Oblomov has not acted according to her directions or expectations, that her power over him is not so great after

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[22](cont'd)aware that they are incapable of love." The critic expresses his open preference for Agaf'ia, who for him "is not a woman to figure in romantic dreams" but is "his true wife." Prutskov, on the other hand, asserts that (108) Ol'ga loved Oblomov, whereas Oblomov himself was only in love.

[23] Dobroliubov II, 570. See also Renato Poggioli, The Phoenix and the Spider (Cambridge Mass., 1957), 38. The same author states that Ol'ga was "searching not so much for love as for exaltation and sacrifice" (ibid., 41). Although we tend to agree with the first part of this statement, we feel that sacrifice was not what Ol'ga wanted, although she liked her self-image as a woman who is ready to forget herself for others. On the whole the attitude of the critics to Ol'ga seems to reflect their opinion of Oblomov himself, and those who do not condemn him, but rather see him in a benevolent light, tend to be inappreciative of Ol'ga, sometimes expressing an open preference for Agaf'ia.

[24] See Alekseev 258. He quotes from a letter from Russian women on the occasion of the semi-centenary of the start of Goncharov's literary activity: "Uchish'sia... u Ol'gi - kak liubit' i s dostoinstvom perenosit' razocharovaniia."

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all, and that in fact it is he who caused her to fail in her self-imposed goals.

There is a detail in the novel which is often overlooked. Ol'ga was the lucky owner of a well run estate and a useable country house so that, had she wanted it, marriage to the impractical Oblomov would have been entirely feasible. She nevertheless decides to keep silent about this option, for she wants first to see Oblomov's transformation into an active and enterprising man as the result of his love for her:

> Ona khotela dosledit' do kontsa, kak v ego lenivoi dushe liubov' sovershit perevorot, kak okonchatel'no spadet s nego gnet, kak on ne ustoit pered blizkim schast'em, poluchit blagopriiatnyi otvet iz derevni i, siiaiushchii pribeshit, priletit i polozhit ego k ee nogam, kak oni oba, vperegonku, brosiatsia k tetke, i potom...
>
> Potom ona vdrug skazhet emu, chto i u nee est' derevnia, sad, pavil'on, vid na reku i dom, sovsem gotovyi dlia zhit'ia, kak nado prezhde poekhat' tuda, a potom v Oblomovku.
>
> "Net, ne khochu blagopriiatnogo otveta, - podumala ona, - on zagorditsia i ne pochuvstvuet dazhe radosti, chto u menia est' svoe imenie, dom, sad... Net, pust' on luchshe pridet rasstroennyi nepriiatnym pis'mom, chto v derevne besporiadok, chto nado emu pobyvat' samomu. On poskachet slomia golovu v Oblomovku, naskoro sdelaet vsio nuzhnye rasporiazheniia, mnogoe zabudet, ne sumeet, vse koe-kak, i poskachet obratno, i vdrug uznaet, chto ne nado bylo skakat' - chto est' dom, sad i pavil'on s vidom, chto est' gde zhit' i bez ego Oblomovki... Da, da, ona ni za chto ne skazhet emu, vyderzhit do kontsa: pust' on s'ezdit tuda, pust' poshevelitsia, ozhivet - vse dlia nee, vo imia budushchego schast'ia. (IV, 354)

As this passage shows, Ol'ga's exalted imagination suggests to her images of the new Oblomov which are hard to visualize, but it also shows that on a mundane level the

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conditions for marriage were quite favourable. It is therefore Oblomov's refusal to make even a token attempt to become practical that, along with his gradual detachment from her, is the decisive factor in Ol'ga's ultimate disappointment. It is this that causes her to break off the relationship on her own initiative at what appears to be a severe emotional cost. In this case it is Ol'ga's judiciousness and her sense of self preservation which serve to direct her away from what would be a wrong and unfulfilling relationship. For although Ol'ga likes to present the image of a generous and altruistic person, she is aware that self-sacrifice is not what she wants from life. As she once says to Oblomov, "Ia ne khochu ni chakhnut; ni umirat'" (IV, 298).

During the meeting when Ol'ga breaks her engagement with Oblomov, a meeting which turns out to be their last, Ol'ga behaves with intelligence and composure, but not with kindness. It is true that she is ready to take upon herself a part of the responsibility for the failure of their relationship, but the reasons she gives are all self-flattering. For example, she blames her pride and her imagination, qualities which she fancies in herself, for overestimating Oblomov's potential for what she considers his rehabilitation and return to an active life. In line with this self-righteousness is her insistance on the value of the sacrifices she has made for Oblomov and on his agreeing never to blame her for her refusal:

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> Ona zamolchala, potom sela.
>
> - Ia ne mogu stoiat': nogi drozhat. Kamen' ozhil by ot togo, chto ia sdelala, - prodolzhala ona tomnym golosom. - Teper' ne sdelaiu nichego, ni shagu, dazhe ne poidu v Letnii sad: vse bespolezno - ty umer! Ty soglasen so mnoi, Il'ia? - pribavila ona potom, pomolchav. - Ne upreknesh' menia nikogda, chto ia po gordosti ili po kaprizu rasstalas' s toboi?
>
> On otritsatel'no pokachal golovoi. (IV, 379)

On the other hand she expresses no concern for Oblomov's own feelings or for the emotional blow which her refusal may give him. Instead she actually blames him for the failure of the relationship and, with surprising cruelty and conviction, pronounces him dead ("ty uzhe davno umer..." IV, 379). She further crushes him by refusing to admit the value of the one quality with which she had credited him in her innermost thoughts, his gentleness (nezhnost'),[25] a quality which, as she decides at this point, she can easily find elsewhere (IV, 382). The irony here is that, except for Oblomov, nezhnost' is conspicuously absent from Ol'ga's life.[26]

In this final encounter Ol'ga has shown herself as more than a strong woman capable of firm and implacable decisions. With the exception of a few last words, when she tries to make up for her harshness, the way she handles her refusal shows her indifference to and lack of compassion for

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[25] Oblomov's nezhnost', the degree of which Ol'ga had never seen before in a man's eyes, is the quality which she appreciates most in him. See IV, 247, 282, 363.

[26] There is, for example, no nezhnost' between Ol'ga and her aunt (229). Later, when married to Shtol'ts, Ol'ga again nostalgically remembers this quality in Oblomov, his golubinaia nezhnost' (481).

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the feelings of a person she had only recently claimed to love and her readiness to remove an unwanted factor in her life without hesitation or serious regret. Her words to Oblomov are aimed not only at rejecting his love, but at destroying him emotionally and leaving him without a hope of either deserving love or of achieving a meaningful life without her. (At this point we should note that Ol'ga neither knows of nor suspects Oblomov's own mechanism of self protection and the secret refuge and salvation which he has in the person of his landlady, Agaf'ia).

But it is in fact possible to consider Ol'ga more responsible for the failure of the relationship than she admits, and in particular for Oblomov's indolence and his gradual detachment from her. For example, one can see that in trying to influence and reform Oblomov, Ol'ga does not spare his sense of pride. Although she is well aware of her own pride (gordost') and self-esteem (samoliubie), she denies those qualities in Oblomov (IV, 207) who, without connecting it with his effusive expressions of feeling (IV, 218), nevertheless rates samoliubie as highly as Ol'ga,[27] and has a particularly acute sense of pride connected with his feeling of uniqueness.[28] Without regard to all this, and intent on achieving her ends, Ol'ga repeatedly reproaches him, mocks him, gives him a feeling of guilt (IV, 249), and

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[27] See, for example, his remark to Shtol'ts: "Dazhe samoliubie - na chto ono tratilos'?.. A ved' samoliubie - sol' zhizni!" (IV, 190)

[28] His sense of uniqueness is expressed most clearly in a discussion with Zakhar, IV, 91-96.

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gradually makes him fear and resent her, so that he avoids seeing her partly in order not to be criticized or feel humiliated.[29] Furthermore, in her attempt at reform, Ol'ga interferes with his basic personality, both inducing him to become more like the others and instilling in him a feeling of inadequacy, much to his resentment. She even denies him the satisfaction of at least having the illusion of being in control, as when she calmly accepts his proposal of marriage (IV, 294). Still another cause for Oblomov's gradual withdrawal may be the lack of physical intimacy with Ol'ga. For when he asks her for a kiss, she not only shields herself with her parasol, but gives him a feeling of fear and rejection which prevents him from even thinking of approaching her again:

> - Ol'ga!.. Vy... luchshe vsekh zhenshchin, vy pervaia zhenshchina v mire! - skazal on v vostorge i ne pomnia sebia, proster ruki, naklonilsia k nei.
> - Radi boga... odin potselui, v zalog nevyrazimogo schast'ia, - prosheptal on, kak v bredu.
> Ona mgnovenno podalas' na shag nazad; torzhestvennoe siianie, kraski sleteli s litsa; krotkie glaza zablistali grozoi.
> - Nikogda! Nikogda! Ne podkhodite! - s ispugom, pochti s uzhasom skazala ona, vytianuv obe ruki i zontik mezhdu nim i soboi, i ostanovilas' kak vkopannaia, okamenelaia, ne dysha, v groznoi poze, s groznym vzgliadom, vpoluoborot.
> On vdrug prismirel: pered nim ne krotkaia Ol'ga, a oskorblennaia boginia gordosti i gneva, s szhatymi gubami, s molniei v glazakh.
> - Prostite!.. - bormotal on, smushchennyi, unichtozhennyi.
> Ona medlenno obernulas' i poshla, kosias' boiazlivo cherez plecho, chto on. A on nichego: idet tikho, budto volochit khvost, kak sobaka na kotoruiu

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[29] For example IV, 321, 337, 345.

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topnuli. (IV, 271-72)[30]

In justification of Ol'ga's action here, we must remember that at this point in her life she has no other protector than herself and that, after all, Oblomov was slow to propose. But we may also remember that, although after this rebuke he did not try to approach Ol'ga again, Oblomov noticed with particular interest the stately figure and the round elbows of his new landlady, whom he met for the first time only a few days later.

As a strong woman, Ol'ga not only gains the satisfaction of being in control of her life, but also has to pay a price for it. For the man of her choice she is a challenge, her presence makes continual demands, and she is the one to set values and goals. But not all men appreciate that, and Oblomov with his particular sensitivities enjoys it least. Hence, in spite of the feeling which at a certain point in their relationship both Ol'ga and Oblomov have for each other, a break is inevitable.

But in spite of the seeming failure of the relationship, it turned out to be beneficial at least for Ol'ga. From the start she had correctly guessed its potential value in providing her with a psychological, sentimental and emotional experience which she would otherwise not have found. Through this relationship Ol'ga becomes more mature, profound and complex than before. It is quite significant that Shtol'ts, who had been absent from

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[30] See also IV, 287 and 294.

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the action of the novel during the whole period of Ol'ga's romance with Oblomov, is particularly impressed by the new, sophisticated Ol'ga in whom he had difficulty recognizing the bright girl whose youthful charm he used to like and whom he had last seen only a year earlier (IV, 409-11).

The subsequent relationship between Ol'ga and Shtol'ts, whom she eventually marries, temporarily restores Ol'ga's happiness and further contributes to her general development, especially to her intellectual growth. Under the guidance and teaching of Shtol'ts, who is now her husband, Ol'ga, who had long been worried by the limited educational opportunities available to a girl (IV, 249), finds self realization through her progress in learning and begins to become the intellectual equal of her husband. But once again, as with Oblomov, she soon finds a seemingly happy relationship go sour, and is filled with frustration and dissatisfaction at the aimless routine of her existence.

Among several possible explanations for her state of mind,[31] the social constraints under which she has to live contribute in an important way to her growing unhappiness. For the numerous aesthetic, intellectual and practical satisfactions of her daily life, the relative progressiveness of her situation in the intellectual sphere,

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[31] Setchkarev, 148, explains it mainly in terms of existential boredom; Lyngstad, 103, explains Ol'ga's depression as an erotic frustration; E. Krasnoshchekova, "Oblomov" I.A. Goncharova (Moscow, 1970), 71, concludes that with Shtol'ts Ol'ga loses her personality and becomes ordinary. These different interpretations are not mutually exclusive.

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only serve to emphasize the restrictions and limitations of the traditional society to which she is still bound. Though it is clear that Ol'ga's freely chosen marriage to Shtol'ts is an improvement on the pre-arranged or even forced marriage which could have been her lot in the past,[32] her daily existence is nevertheless not too different from the life of a truly traditional woman whose interests are limited to the household and the immediate family and whose daily goals are only the reflection of her husband's concerns. Ol'ga expects much from life, and it is not surprising that she makes high demands on the man whose life she shares, but in doing so she jeopardizes both her own and her husband's happiness:

> Ona rosla vse vyshe, vyshe... Andrei videl, chto prezhnii ideal ego zhenshchiny i zheny nedosiagaem, no on byl schastliv i blednym otrazheniem ego v Ol'ga: on ne ozhidal nikogda i ètogo.
>
> Mezhdu tem i emu dolgo, pochti vsiu zhizn' predstoiala eshche nemalaia zabota podderzhivat' na odnoi vysote svoe dostoinstvo muzhchiny v glazakh samoliubivoi gordoi Ol'gi, ne iz poshloi revnosti, a dlia togo, chtob ne pomrachilas' èta khrustal'naia zhizn; a èto moglo by sluchit'sia, esli b khot' nemnogo pokolebalas' ee vera v nego. (IV, 476)

Certain passages in the novel suggest that in both the case of the Oblomov and of Shtol'ts Ol'ga sees her relationship with men not as one of friendship or love but

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[32] Ol'ga had received a proposal of marriage from an old baron who was a friend of the family. It is easy to imagine that in the not too distant past such a proposal would have been accepted. For, as Ol'ga says, women do not marry, but are given into marriage (IV, 294).

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rather as a contest or a fight.[33] This attitude creates a dilemma in that, while she expects a man to win such a contest in order to deserve her respect, she at the time tries to be a winner herself, thus making a harmonious solution impossible. In spite of the profit she has gained from her relationship with both Oblomov and Shtol'ts, any lasting happiness, contained as it would have to be within the framework of the life of a traditional woman, does not seem possible for Ol'ga.

It is not unusual for Goncharov to give a hint of his own opinion about a given problem in the form and in the place in which one least expects it. Thus, although he refrains openly from suggesting any solution to Ol'ga's dissatisfaction in her relationship with Oblomov, he clearly illustrates in his portrait of Zakhar (whose resemblance to Oblomov has been noticed by critics)[34] and Anisia how certain men resent having a wife who is more efficient than they are and who can see their weaknesses.[35] He also shows through the example of Anisia and Agaf'ia that the professional skills of a woman are most appreciated by another efficient woman. The two are able to form what might be called a successful working team without either jealousy

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[33] Note the expression "v ètom poedinke" in connection with Oblomov (IV, 239), or "ona... mogla... udachno vesti voinu...," etc., in connection with Shtol'ts (IV, 424).
[34] As Poggioli (43) says, "Oblomov and Zakhar represent the same philosophy of life."
[35] This motif appears throughout the novel. See especially IV, 220-23, where the author stresses that, like other men in the same situation, Zakhar's pride suffered and made him treat his wife with undeserved harshness.

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or rivalry.[36] Agaf'ia, moreover, finally presents the example of a traditional woman who has her own field of activity in which she excels and which, as the author comments, allows her to reign in her palladium, even if that palladium is only her household or kitchen, as it is in Agaf'ia's case (IV, 322, 483). Although in illustrating these two relationships he makes no specific reference to Ol'ga, the contrast between the pairs Anis'ia/Agaf'ia and Anis'ia/Zakhar seems to imply that Ol'ga might be better off co-operating with other women than competing with men.

Agaf'ia, the other major female character in Oblomov, has been referred to by at least one critic as Oblomov's evil genius.[37] And yet, as the novel shows, she was the only person to help Oblomov recover from the emotional trauma and physical relapse which Ol'ga's rejection (whether deserved or not) had caused him. Moreover, Agaf'ia's own life with Oblomov and her love for him proved that, despite the opinions of Ol'ga and Shtol'ts, Oblomov's life was neither wasted nor finished, but could serve as a source of happiness for others and promote the spiritual growth and transformation of another human being.

Agaf'ia should not be blamed for her lack of fine intellect, culture, or high ambitions. Her low level of

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[36] See IV, 322-23. The cooperation between Anis'ia and Agaf'ia, mentioned with particular emphasis, recalls the trend of the English feminists, who believed that the improvement of the lot of women was a mission of women themselves (see Stites, 64). The same idea is also alluded to in Obryv and in the late short work Literaturnyi vecher, as well as in Fregat Pallada.

[37] A.V. Druzhinin in Poliakov, 176.

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development was the natural result of the milieu in which she lived. With her interests being limited to the household, church and her immediate surroundings and with the major decisions being taken by the man of the family, Agaf'ia's brother, Agaf'ia herself had no opportunity to use her intellect at all. She did not have the slightest inkling of culture, since books or theatre represented for her only the opportunity for a social life for which she had no time (IV, 324-25). On the affective level, she does not know either the feelings of love or their verbal expression, since, as the author says, she had married without love, had never loved any one after that (IV, 392), and remembered her husband's touch as being more like a blow than a caress (IV, 393).

Agaf'ia's situation was typical for a woman of the lower middle class. In contrast to the situation of the upper class, Westernization reached this level of society only very slowly, and the mentality of such people was closer to the traditional ways of the Russian past. And in Muscovite Russia, as Stites says,

> a man's working perception of women was that they were impure by nature and thus a standing temptation to sinfulness; were inferior in every possible way to men; were best isolated from the outside world and subservient to husband or father and had as their principal function the satisfaction of man's natural desires and the bearing of children...From the principle came the practice, prevalent among boyar, merchant, and peasant, of treating the wife, or its equivalent, as nothing more than a <u>samka</u>, a brood mare upon whom the sexual act could be

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performed at any hour.[38]

This situation helps explain the original manifestations of Agaf'ia's personality more in terms of social conditions than of inborn character traits. So, for example, the novelist shows that what looks like her dullness (tupost') or frigidity quickly disappears under more favourable circumstances. Thus "tupost' propadala, kogda zagovarivali o znakomom ei predmete" (IV, 308), and her initial reaction of indifference when she receives her first kiss from Oblomov ("stoia primo i nepodvizhno, kak loshad', na kotoruiu nadevaiut khomut" IV, 396) is soon replaced by more responsive behaviour.

On a personal level Agaf'ia, like Ol'ga, is an exception, and differs in several ways from the people who surround her, such as her own uncouth and dishonest brother, or her vulgar and greedy in-laws. Agaf'ia is simple, but perfectly honest, disinterested, and loyal. She is not without ambition, but her personal pride is centered around the activities of the household (IV, 389) and her life is her work. "Bog trudy liubit" (IV, 485), as she says.

In her attitude to Oblomov, which differs in most ways from that of Ol'ga, Agaf'ia is selfless and non-critical. She loves him exactly for what he is (which Ol'ga refused to do),[39] for his being a barin and different from anyone she

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[38] Stites 11-13.
[39] At their final parting Oblomov says "Voz'mi menia, kak ia est', liubi no mne chto est' khoroshego," but Ol'ga refuses (IV, 381).

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had ever known.

> Agaf'ia Matveevna malo prezhde vidala takikh liudei, kak Oblomov, a esli vidala, tak izdali, i, mozhet byt', oni nravilis' ei, no zhili oni v drugoi, ne v ee sfere, i ne bylo nikakogo sluchaia k sblizheniiu s nimi...
> ...ves' on tak khorosh, tak chist, mozhet nichego ne delat' i ne delaet, emu delaiut vse drugie: u nego est' Zakhar i eshche trista Zakharov...
> On barin, on siiaet, bleshchet! Pritom on tak dobr: kak miagko on khodit, delaet dvizheniia, dotronetsia do ruki - kak barkhat, a tronet, byvalo, rukoi muzh, kak udarit! I gliadit on i govorit tak zhe miagko, s takoi dobrotoi... (IV, 392)

In her lack of self-awareness, however, Agaf'ia does not examine her feelings or think about either the strength or the nature of her growing attachment to her lodger:

> No ona ne znala, chto s nei delaetsia, nikogda ne sprashivala sebia, a pereshla pod èto sladostnoe igo bezuslovno, bez soprotivlenii i uvlechenii, bez trepeta, bez strasti, bez smutnykh predchuvstvii, tomlenii, bez igry i muzyki nervov.
> Ona kak budto vdrug pereshla v druguiu veru i stala ispovedyvat' ee, ne rassuzhdaia, chto èto za vera, kakie dogmaty v nei, a slepo povinuias' ee zakonam.
> Eto kak-to leglo na nee samo soboi, i ona podoshla tochno pod tuchu, ne piatias' nazad i ne zabegaia vpered, a poliubila Oblomova prosto, kak budto prostudilas' ili skhvatila neizlechimuiu likhoradku.
> Ona sama i ne podozrevala nichego: esli b èto ei skazat', to èto bylo by dlia ne novost'iu, - ona by usmekhnulas' i zastydilas'. (IV, 391)

And yet, in spite of her innocence and, as the author says, her absolute incapacity to make the attempt at enticing Oblomov, <u>pokoketnichat'</u>, (IV, 393), Agaf'ia emanates femininity and sensuality which catch Oblomov's imagination. She actually teases him unwittingly, when her arm (on the beauty of which he had complimented her, IV,

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325) appears through the door of his room holding a plate with a tempting and steaming hot pie, but the rest of her handsome person[40] remains hidden behind the door to excite his imagination.

Their first open physical contact, no matter how timid, has been commented upon more than once for its prosaic and humble setting and imagery and has occasionally been unfavourably compared with the poetic atmosphere which surrounded Oblomov's romance with Ol'ga.[41] But no matter how prosaic, the passage skillfully conveys the human warmth and the physical closeness which foreshadow the development of an intimate relationship. Although when Oblomov first tries to kiss her Agaf'ia's words convey a token resistance appropriate in a woman who does not make herself easily available, she in no way intimidates or rejects him and, while not encouraging him, accepts the kiss without shyness:

> - Skazhite, chto esli b ia vas ... poliubil?
> Ona usmekhnulas'.
> - A vy by poliubili menia? opiat' sprosil on.
> - Otchego zhe ne poliubit'? Bog vsekh velel liubit'.
> - A esli ia potseliui vas? - shepnul on, naklonias' k ee shcheke, tak chto dykhanie ego obozhglo ei shcheku.
> - Teper' ne sviataia nedelia, - skazala ona s usmeshkoi.
> - Nu, potseluite zhe menia!
> - Vot, bog dast, dozhivem do Paskhi, tak potseluemsia, - skazala ona, ne udivliaias', ne smushchaias', ne robeia, a stoia priamo i nepodvizhno, kak loshad', na kotoruiu nadevaiut khomut. On slegka potseloval ee v sheiu. (IV, 396)

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[40] As the author describes it, Agaf'ia's shapely body could serve as a model for a painter or a sculptor (IV, 306).
[41] See, for example, Krasnoshchekova 67, Prutskov 110, Ehre 208, Setchkarev 158.

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But in the scene which follows, Agaf'ia becomes more forthcoming and subtly encourages communication which goes beyond words and a contact which leads to a mutual understanding and to what could be defined as an unofficial proposal and its acceptance:

> - Chto èto u vas na khalate opiat' piatno? - zabotlivo sprosila ona, vziav v ruki polu khalata. - Kazhetsia maslo? - Ona poniukhala piatno. - Gde èto vy? Ne s lampadki li nakapalo?
> - Ne znaiu, gde èto ia priobrel.
> - Verno, za dver' zadeli? - vdrug dogadalas' Agaf'ia Matveevna.- Vchera mazali petli: vse skripiat. Skin'te da daite skoree, ia vyvedu i zamoiu: zavtra nichego ne budet.
> - Dobraia Agaf'ia Matveevna! - skazal Oblomov, lenivo sbrasyvaia s plech khalat. - Znaete, chto: poedemte-ka v derevniu zhit': tam-to khoziaistvo! Chego, chego net: gribov, iagod, varen'ia, ptichii, skotnyi dvor...
> - Net, zachem? - zakliuchila ona so vzdokhom. - Zdes' rodilis', vek zhili, zdes' i umeret' nado. (IV, 396-97)[42]

As one can see, with Agaf'ia Oblomov can feel confident about his human dignity and his manliness. With Agaf'ia he is the one who is in control and, unlike the case with Ol'ga, he does not have to fear either effusive caresses[43] or a humiliating rejection. From Agaf'ia he need fear neither criticism nor pressure to become active: "nikakikh ponukanii, nikakkih trebovanii ne pred'iavliaet Agaf'ia Matveevna" (IV, 395). But in her house Oblomov, without

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[42] As one can see from this passage, Agaf'ia finds an excuse to touch Oblomov and even encourages him to take off his dressing gown. If one considers the other carefully selected images in this passage, one can even see a reference to anointment from above with the oil dripping from the lampadka in front of the icon as well as to the quiet opening and closing of doors.

[43] As the author says, passionate women instilled anxiety in Oblomov (IV, 211).

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being forced to, nevertheless participates in a token fashion in the activities of the household. So he once helped Agaf'ia grind coffee (IV, 349), helped her children study, or took them for short walks. Under most circumstances Agaf'ia does not attempt to influence his actions, and when for his own good she has to do so, as when he is ill, she does it without his noticing. Thus, when she tries to use her power to make him walk more and eat or sleep less, she does not insist openly, but uses tactful methods to make him adhere to the prescribed regime:

> Bez oka Agaf'i Matveevny nichego by ètogo ne sostoialos', no ona umela vvesti ètu sistemu tem, chto podchinila ei ves' dom i to khitrost'iu, to laskoi otvlekala Oblomova ot soblaznitel'nykh pokushenii na vino, na posleobedennuiu dremotu, na zhirnye kulebiaki.
>
> Chut' on vzdremnet, padal stul v komnate, tak, sam soboiu, ili s shumom razbivalas' staraia negodnaia posuda v sosednei komnate, a ne to zashumiat deti - khot' von begi! Esli ètо ne pomozhet, razdavalsia ee krotkii golos: ona zvala ego ili sprashivala o chem-nibud'. (IV, 489)

Although Agaf'ia's loving care costs her effort and sacrifice, she never allows Oblomov to feel obliged to her. She herself is not aware of her kindness in spending nights by his bedside when he is sick (IV, 393), in praying for him in church or, later, pawning her own jewelry to provide him the dishes he likes. Agaf'ia expects neither gratitude nor recognition, and even when Oblomov dies she refuses, as his widow, to profit from the advantages which a marriage to a landlord could have offered her, and continues her modest existence as before. In her selflessness she even allows her

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son to be taken away from her, since she believes that Oblomov's friends, Ol'ga and Shtol'ts, will give him a more suitable upbringing than she could. For her the son of Oblomov is special, since, like his father, he is a barchonok (IV, 500).

Agaf'ia's grief over Oblomov's death and her spiritual transformation have been commended by most critics, even by those who speak of her only in passing.[44] From our point of view it confirms the capacity of women for rapid spiritual growth upon which the author of Oblomov specifically commented and which he attributed to Ol'ga.[45]

But Agaf'ia's role goes further, in that she illustrates an opposite attitude from that of Ol'ga. The two women represent two radically different approaches to Oblomov with his deeply ingrained character traits: Ol'ga refuses to accept him the way he is, and even pronounces him dead, while Agaf'ia likes him specifically for his unusual, individual personality and proves not only that he is not dead but that his life is beneficial to others, since it can enrich and transform the lives of other human beings. This difference in their approach to Oblomov can be extended to a difference in attitude to the past and to the old ways of life: Ol'ga condemns and rejects it, while Agaf'ia appreciates its manifestations. On a personal level, too, Ol'ga and Agaf'ia represent two extremes. Ol'ga is an

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[44] See A.V. Druzhinin in Poliakov 177-78; Tseitlin 191; Prutskov 111; Lyngstad 108; Ehre 226.
[45] IV, 234 (quoted on p. 60).

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activist and a reformer. She is critical, intolerant and ambitious, always looking out for broader horizons and impatiently seeking new challenges and new activites to fill her life.[46] Agaf'ia, on the other hand, is a traditional woman who neither expects nor approves of change. She has her own traditional values which she neither doubts nor questions, and her spiritual integrity compensates for her lack of refinement and intellect. The difference in their approach to Oblomov illustrates an ethical problem raised in the novel and expressed by the author from Shtol'ts' point of view: "Gde zhe blago? Gde zlo? Gde granitsa mezhdu nimi?" (IV, 461) It is worth noting, however, that in his declining years Oblomov himself was not bothered by such questions: "I u nego ne rozhdaetsia... muchitel'nykh terzanii o tom...chto nichego ne sdelal on, ni zla, ni dobra..." (IV, 395). In Oblomov the boundary between right and wrong is difficult to discern, and it is generally left to the reader to make his own distinctions based on his personal preference.[47]

Goncharov's next novel, Obryv, goes further in the exploration of moral problems and subtly incorporates many insights on questions to do with women. Of prime importance among these is the morality of free love and in particular the theme of Fallen Women, a problem which, as the author says, had bothered him for a long time.[48] Accordingly the

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[46] Cf. Maegd-Soep 195.
[47] Setchkarev (161) considers that Oblomov presents a philosophical and ethical system.
[48] See "Namereniia, zadachi i idei romana 'Obryv'", (VIII, 216-20).

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relationships between women and men in this novel are dealt with more in terms of turbulent passions than of harmonious love, marriage, or friendship. Although the theme of passion is developed primarily in connection with a major heroine, Vera, it is also important in the depiction of the other female characters as well. Goncharov himself remarks in one of his auto-critical articles: "Rabotaia nad ser'eznoi i pylkoi strast'iu Very, ia nevol'no rasshevelil i ischerpal v romane pochti vse obrazy strastei" (VIII, 209).[49] In his auto-critical articles dealing with Obryv, the author has already briefly discussed the characters and the themes of the novel, but there is still room for a more detailed discussion of the work.

The three main female characters or heroines of Obryv are the Grandmother, Vera, and Marfen'ka, about all three of whom the author said: "V Babushke otrazilas' vsia staraia russkaia zhizn' s edva zeleneiushchimi svezhimi pobegami - Veroi, Marfen'koi..." (VII, 162) Obryv contrasts with the earlier novel Oblomov in that the heroines do not represent extreme opposites. The three principal female characters in

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[49] Goncharov VIII, 209. After the unfavourable reception of Obryv by most contemporary critics Goncharov wrote two articles dealing specifically with that novel. "Predislovie k romanu 'Obryv'" (VIII, 141-69) was first published in 1938 and was initially intended as an introduction to the separate edition of Obryv. The manuscript is dated 1869 and bears the author's note "Unichtozhit'." The second article, "Namereniia, zadachi i idei romana 'Obryv'" (VIII, 208-20), is believed to have been written in 1876 and was published for the first time in 1895. The third article, "Luchshe pozdno, chem nikogda" (VIII, 64-113), which is a critical analysis of all three of Goncharov's novels, was written in 1869-70 and first published in 1879.

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the novel are all related, belong to the same social milieu, and their lives are restricted to the small country estate Malinovka and its immediate environs. All three share a common simplicity of manner and a lack of self-consciousness or pretence. But above all they resemble each other in their inner integrity, their honesty and spiritual purity, their esteem for human goodness, and their basic emotional stability and strength.

Any differences that they show, whether of outlook or of behaviour, are due to differences in age (a wide gap separates the Grandmother from Vera and Marfen'ka) or in character, not in social background. Thus, because of the similarities in their upbringing, Vera and Marfen'ka can easily be imagined as sisters, and yet their individual inclinations are very different. The glimpse we have of them as small girls shows that their differences both in character and appearance are inborn and are not newly acquired or learned by imitation. Already at this early stage Vera is shown as reserved, proud, independent and inquisitive, while Marfen'ka is outgoing, kind, emotional and careful (V, 76-77, 236-37). These character traits determine their actions as adults later in the novel.

The Grandmother, who has an unusually strong personality, plays a complex role in the novel. On one level she acts as a member of the older generation, and in this capacity she is the educator of her grandnieces (a role that will be fully discussed in the following chapter). On

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another level, however, the author, through a flashback into her past, shows her as an individual who, some two generations earlier, had found herself in a situation similar to that of Vera at the end of the novel and who, without any help, had succeeded in building a full and honourable life for herself and for others.

The function of the minor female characters in Obryv is to act as foils to the three heroines, contrasting with them both in character and mentality as revealed above all through the theme of love.

Two of these characters are introduced only in connection with Raiskii and contrast with the heroines mainly in their resigned approach to life. These are Sof'ia Belovodova and the Natasha of Raiskii's literary sketch.

Sof'ia is a young widow who shows her resignation by denying herself the right to live her life to the full, restrained as she is by the rigid traditions of her family and her ancestral code.[50] Since Raiskii, who is her distant cousin, is dazzled by her beauty, he tries to bring her to life, to awaken her from the sleep in which, he believes, she is submerged. He holds out before her tantalizing pictures of happiness which she could find if only she would

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[50] For a discussion of Sof'ia and her family see A.M. Skabichevskii, "Staraia pravda" in Poliakov 277-329, esp. 285-290. See also N.K. Mikhailovskii, "Sof'ia Nikolaevna Belovodova", ibid. 184-196, esp. 188-91. This critic defines Sof'ia as "nothing more than a statue" (191) and says that egoism (193) is the basic feature of her character. The drafts of Obryv show that Goncharov considered showing a certain change in Sof'ia's character later in the novel, but he did not carry this out in his final version (Tseitlin 240).

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escape from the vigilant portraits of her ancestors and would go out into the street to mix with the common, living crowd (V, 28-29, 108-109). Above all he insists on her freedom to love, to choose for herself the man with whom she could be really happy even if he did not meet the requirements of the ancestral rules. Sof'ia's indifferent reaction to these overtures makes her seem to Raiskii distant and cold beyond redemption.

But in his novel the author portrays Sof'ia and her environment from several points of view. Raiskii sees her the way she presents herself to the world. But we also hear her story both from her own point of view and as described by the omniscient narrator, each method of presentation being justified by its own special function. Furthermore at the end of the novel she is referred to in yet another way through the letter of one of Raiskii's friends. This information contains above all the evidence of public opinion and gossip, even if it is reported by a man favourably inclined to Sof'ia (VI, 221-23).

It is only through the combination of all these impressions that one can get a clear picture of Sof'ia and understand that unless she changes her life drastically and breaks away from the ancestral laws and the web of her family and its social framework, there is to be no escape for her from the demands of her milieu and from the bonds of an education rigidly imposed upon her by her mother and her two aunts after her mother's death.

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In his portrayal of Sof'ia, the author makes it clear that adherence to the harsh demands made on her by her elders was not easy. For although from Raiskii's point of view Sof'ia is a woman with no feelings, through her reactions when she is alone the narrator shows how strenuous were the efforts that Sof'ia had to make in order to become mistress of herself and her feelings. As a child she is portrayed, through her own recollections, as a lively and sensitive girl (V, 99). In the expression of her feelings she is shown to have been sincere and spontaneous (V, 103-104), and her love for music betrays a gifted, passionate and artistic nature (V, 103). Nevertheless, as the narrative shows, Sof'ia was never expected to develop her talents, to learn the things which her tutors were trying to teach her, or to achieve true perfection in the arts. As a gifted pianist, she was not allowed to study music seriously (V, 102). Her program of study had merely touched upon culture and civilization and was primarily designed to endow her with social polish and genteel tastes. Her appearance, needless to say, had always to be perfect. To an outside observer she could not afford to appear anything less than perfect, formal and impeccable. As a result of such an education Sof'ia could indeed count upon a brilliant marriage. It is not surprising that Belovodov had chosen her as a wife whom he could introduce with pride and glamour at the French Court (V, 106).

At the later stage in her life when Raiskii meets her,

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Sof'ia's basically emotional nature still comes to light. And although in public, at the theatre, her social training prevents her from laughing out loud, or crying, still in moments of personal crisis the author repeatedly states that she blushed, became pale, or acquired a concerned expression. Similarly, when Raiskii succeeds in ruffling her calm by portraying scenes of love and happiness, in his presence she only reveals a slight impatience, but after he has gone the author lets us see her real state of mind:

> On podoshel k dveri i oglianulsia. Ona sidit nepodvizhno: na litse tol'ko neterpenie, chtob on ushel. Edva on vyshel, ona nalila iz grafina v stakan vody, medlenno vypila ego i potom velela otlozhit' karetu. Ona sela v kreslo i zadumalas', ne shevelias'. (V, 110)

Later, when as a result of social gossip Sof'ia is blamed for the little bit of freedom which she had allowed herself under the influence, perhaps, of Raiskii's free ideas, she herself feels guilty and cries. Her grief is described in a letter from Raiskii's friend, as seen by Sof'ia's father:

> "I chto vsego grustnee, govoril on, chto bedniazhka Sophie ubivaetsia sama: "Oui, la faute est a moi, tverdit ona, - je me suis compromise, une femme qui se respecte ne doit pas pousser la chose trop loin...se permettre" - "Mais qu'as tu donc fait, mon enfant?" - sprashivaiu ia. "J'ai fait un faux pas...- tverdit ona, - ogorchila tetok, vas, papa!.." - "Mais pas le moins du monde", - govoriu ia - i vse naprasno! Et elle pleure, elle pleure...cette pauvre enfant! Ce billet... Posmotrite ètu zapisku!" (VI, 222-23)

At the time when Raiskii receives the letter describing Sof'ia's problems, his volatile mind is taken with another

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woman, Vera. Therefore, the answer to his earlier question as to whether Sof'ia is capable of feeling does not interest him any more. Otherwise he would have seen that her real nature was sensitive, kind, subdued and that the true factor which governed her life was her personal and family pride and her sense of duty to ancestral honour. As Raiskii's friend writes about her:

> I tvoia Sof'ia stradaet teper' vdvoine: i ottogo, chto oskorblena vnutrenno - gordosti ee krasoty i gordosti ee roda nanesen udar - i ottogo, chto sdelala... un faux pas... (VI, 225)

Natasha, the other minor character connected only with Raiskii, holds a special position in Goncharov's fiction in that she is completely unlike any other woman (or man, for that matter) whom Goncharov chose to describe. It is significant that she is at one remove from the narrator of the novel, appearing only in a sketch allegedly written by Raiskii himself (V, 114-23). The fictitious Natasha is extremely feminine, gentle, submissive and passive. In Raiskii's words, "Net, net, - ona ne to, ona golub', a ne zhenshchina!" (V, 123) This portrait of a meek, deeply loving and forgiving woman who dies prematurely is unparalleled in Goncharov. Natasha's helpless and lifeless image brings out the vitality of his other characters, who, whether good or evil, traditional or progressive, always show a healthy resilience and sense of self preservation.

The other minor female characters, who are all part of the local scene, illustrate the themes of morality versus

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free love. To this group belongs the grotesque Kritskaia, who, as the author puts it, could not be considered guilty of the act of succumbing to temptations but was nevertheless spoiled and sexually corrupt (VIII, 219). Included here, too, is the sensuous and cynical Ul'iana, who is indiscriminately unfaithful to her credulous husband, and even seduces the husband's friend Raiskii (VI, 89-94). This episode does not speak well of Raiskii and accordingly brings into question a man's morality as well. Then there is the promiscuous Marina, whom the author calls "èta krepostnaia Messalina" (VIII, 208). All these women contrast strongly with the Grandmother, Vera and Marfen'ka and represent types of personality and patterns of behaviour which are not to be found in them.

In his article "Vechnye sputniki," Merezhkovskii expresses a particularly favourable opinion of these three major characters. According to him, the Grandmother and Marfen'ka, who is a traditional girl, can both be identified with the beauty of the olden days (poeziia proshlogo).[51] On the other hand Vera, who searches for her own new values and a new way of life can, in Merezhkovskii's words, be described in terms of poeziia vechnogo. As he says,

> Poèziia proshlogo nachalas', eshche tam - v golubinom, krotkom serdtse Oblomova; ona sdelalas' blagoukhannoi i devstvenno-nezhnoi v Marfen'ke, vysokoi i velichavoi v babushke, i, nakonets, poèziia proshlogo slilas' s poèziei vechnogo v

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[51] D.S. Merezhkovskii, Polnoe Sobranie sochinenii, XVII (Moscow 1914), 50.

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obraze Very.[52]

This general tendency defines on a practical level the priorities in the lives of Marfen'ka and Vera:

> Marfen'ka robko i bezzabotno podchiniaetsia traditsiiam proshlogo; Vera sudit, vybiraet iz proshlogo to, chto kazhetsia ei vechnym, i togda tol'ko prinimaet ego v svoiu dushu, no vsetaki ostaetsia svobodnoi i gordoi.[53]

Although Merezhkovskii correctly describes the general situation of the two women, he omits some important distinctions. For example Marfen'ka, although her existence is rooted in the ways of the past, is the one who particularly enjoys the present. She loves life in all its manifestations. She is not interested either in the past, or in anything of which she has no direct knowledge. She has her own practical philosophy of life, and things unknown to her to do tempt her. As she says, "Chego ne znaesh togo i ne khochetsia" (V, 256). But what she does know she appreciates, and she lives in continuous and close contact with the world around her. She likes her house and her garden, the visitors, her personal possessions, her dresses and she has her favourite foods which she herself carefully stores (V, 238-39). She wants everyone about her to share her happiness, and is kind to the peasants, plays with the children, feeds the animals and birds. Since she easily becomes upset and cries, she is compassionate and can understand the grief of others. But she is not content to

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[52] Ibid., 55.
[53] Ibid., 55.

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simply live with her feelings: she puts them in action and applies in practice the charitable ideas of which she is often only dimly aware.[54] If, at this stage in her life, Marfen'ka is not yet very efficient in the way she applies her kindness, there is no doubt about the essential element of good will. Marfen'ka unconsciously spreads joy and happiness around her, and for this people both appreciate her and love her. The spontaneity of her character, the joyful and loving atmosphere that surrounds her come out most clearly in the scene, when she receives surprise birthday gifts which have been placed in her room overnight while she was asleep. When she wakes up to this wealth of presents she reacts emotionally and starts trying them on:

> Ona vzglianula na nikh bol'shimi glazami, potom okinula vzgliadom prochie podarki, pogliadela po stenam, uveshannym girliandami i tsvetami, - i vdrug opustilas' na stul, zakryla glaza rukami i zalilas' tselym dozhdem goriachikh slez.
>
> Tak zastala ee babushka, neodetiui, neobutuiu, s perstniami na pal'tsakh, v brasletakh, v bril'iantovykh ser'gakh i obil'nykh slezakh. Ona snachala ispugalas', potom uznav prichinu slez, obradovalas' i osypala ee potseluiami.
>
> - Eto bog tebia liubit, ditia moe, -govorila ona, laskaia ee, - za to, chto ty sama vsekh liubish', i vsem, kto pogliadit na tebia, stanovitsia teplo i khorosho na svete!.. (VI, 286)

Marfen'ka's open and spontaneous nature is combined with a sexual naiveté, a lack of sexual awareness that has

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[54] Marfen'ka's kindness has been noticed by A.M. Skabichevskii, "Staraia pravda," in Poliakov 294-96 and 298, although he rates it only as an effortless, instinctive impulse rather than true kindness or generosity. Merezhkovskii, on the other hand, sees Marfen'ka's kindness as an expression of true Christian love (op. cit. 52). Zakharkin (op. cit. 52) labels Marfen'ka as "pervaia iz geroin', storonnits teorii 'malykh del'".

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been remarked upon with surprise and incredulity by certain critics.[55] Although, as the author shows, Marfen'ka undergoes a strong physical reaction in the presence of men, she suppresses any awareness of it. It is only in her sensuous dream about statues that come alive that she reveals her underlying sensuality (VI, 161-62). One should, however, consider that Marfen'ka's ignorance in sexual matters was typical for a 19th century girl from the gentry who, as Stites says, was not encouraged or helped to learn "the intimate secrets of life."[56] Therefore, whereas Marfen'ka's association with Raiskii, who was her cousin, is not only permitted but is actually encouraged by the Grandmother herself ("Potseluites', vy brat i sestra" V, 163, she says), all contacts of a young girl with strangers were entirely forbidden. The events of the novel suggest that these traditional precautions were fully justified, since even Raiskii, a cousin, takes daring steps with Marfen'ka (V, 262-67), whereas Vera's solitary encounters with a man end in catastrophe.

Though Marfen'ka may be naive, she is by no means stupid, and indeed is quite observant. For instance, she guesses quite rightly that Raiskii would be soon bored with her (V, 257). Yet her innocence, combined as it is with a lack of intellectuality, have lead some critics to call her

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[55] Skabichevskii 296-98, Lyngstad 132.
[56] Stites 9.

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silly or prosaic, even if they generally approve of her.[57] We must, however, bear in mind that in the novel Marfen'ka is still a young girl, and that, although physically she is fully developed (V, 256), she is just at the beginning of her life. Indeed, the author specifically points out that further personal growth and development were not only possible but likely. The comments of the author coincide with the opinions of Raiskii:

> On dal sebe slovo ob'iasnit', pri pervom udobnom sluchae, okonchatel'nyi vopros, ne o tom, chto takoe Marfen'ka: èto bylo slishkom ochevidno, a to chto iz nee budet, - i potom uzhe postupit' v otnoshenii k nei, smotria po tomu, chto okazhetsia posle ob'iasneniia. Sposobna li ona k dal'neishemu razvitiiu, ili uzhe doshla do svoikh gerkulesovykh stolbov?
>
> I esli, "pache chaianiia", v nei otkroetsia emu vnezapnyi zolotonosnyi priisk, s bogatymi zalogami, - v zhenshchinakh ne redki takie neozhidannosti, - togda, konechno, on postavit zdes' svoi domashnii zhertvennik. (V, 254)

In another passage, while discussing Marfen'ka with the Grandmother, Raiskii remarks on her potential and her right as a human being to a personal choice: "Ved' ona mysliashchee sushchestvo, chelovek, zachem zhe naviazyvat' ei svoiu voliu i svoe schast'e?" (VI, 78)

As a matter of fact a transformation from a conventional into an independent and less traditional woman already begins when, as a young financée, she visits with the family of her future husband, whose mother (as we shall see in the next chapter) is herself both youthful and progressive. Just as Marfen'ka knew how to enjoy to the full

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[57] See, for example, Merezhkovskii 52.

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the limited life that she led before her engagement, so now she fully savours the pleasures, such as horseback riding, which open up to her in her new existence and which were previously either unavailable to her or expressly forbidden by the Grandmother. This comes out in an explicit comparison between the two stages in her life:

> - Kto tebe pozvolit tak prokaznichat? - strogo zametila babushka. - A vy chto èto, v svoem li ume: devushke na loshadi ezdit'!
> - A Mar'ia Vasil'evna, a Anna Nikolaevna - kak zhe ezdiat oni?
> - Nu, im i otdaite vashe sedlo! Siuda ne zanosite ètikh zatei: poka zhiva, ne pozvoliu. Etak, pozhalui, i do grekha nedolgo: kurit' stanet. (V, 323)

In a short time, however, her attitude has changed radically. Marfen'ka returns from a two week stay with her future in-laws to find the Grandmother plunged in silence and gloom because of what has happened to Vera. She attempts to interest her by describing to her how she spent her time in her new surroundings:

> - My verkhom ezdili, Nikolai Andreich damskoe sedlo vypisal. Ia odna katalas' v lodke, sama grebla, v roshchu s babami khodila!- zatrogivala Marfen'ka babushku, v nadezhde, ne pobranit li ona khot' za èto.
> Tat'iana Markovna budto s ukorom pokachala golovoi, no Marfen'ka videla, chto èto pritvorno, chto ona dumaet o drugom. (VI, 354)

But while the author makes clear that her engagement has brought her new opportunities and new pleasures, he also indicates that the coming marriage gives her a new sense of self-awareness and of duty. This becomes clear from the expression of her face on her wedding day:

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> Marfen'ka siiala, kak kheruvim, - krasotoi, vsei prelest'iu rastsvetshei rozy, i v ètot den' iavilas' v nei novaia cherta, novyi smysl v litse, novoe chuvstvo, vyrazhavsheesia v zadumchivoi ulybke i v visevshikh inogda na resnitsakh slezakh.
> Soznanie novoi zhizni, dal' budushchego, strogost' dolga, moment torzhestva i schast'ia - vse pridavalo litsu i krasote ee nezhnuiu, trogatel'nuiu ten'. (VI, 414)

If one recalls that even in her childhood Marfen'ka fulfilled her duties with thoroughness, seriousness and discipline (V, 236), and that she found ways of expressing her natural qualities of generosity and compassion (V, 236-37), one can well believe that the new possibilities open to her as a married woman will allow her to grow and develop into a woman comparable in character to her Grandmother, even if the conditions of her life lead her away from the traditional ways of her Grandmother's estate.

Another major female character, Vera, is sometimes thought to be the central character or heroine of the entire novel,[58] since her personal drama is of major importance to the plot. The image we have of her is all the more striking in that much of the description of her is given from the point of view of the imaginative and artistic Raiskii, who helps us see Vera in a particularly beautiful and poetic light. The mysterious, beautiful, intelligent and passionate Vera appeals to the reader and evokes his admiration, respect and sympathy.[59]

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[58] Ehre 249, Nedzvetskii 13.
[59] Merezhkovskii (57) compares Vera to a human soul hesitating between earthly happiness and celestial love. As mentioned in the introduction, Vera was one of those

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Vera's main character trait is her absolute quest for freedom. Opinions of other people, as well as the time-tested values and traditions of the past, have no attraction for her. Although she does not criticize or try to change them, she refuses to accept them unconditionally, and is constantly searching for new insights and new vistas of her own which would offer her permanent, unchanging values which she could fully believe in (VI, 312-13). For herself, she declines any kind of external authority over her mind, will, or behaviour and feels free to set her own standards, which happen to be high. As she says towards the end of the novel: "...ia dumala, chto odnoi svoei voli i uma dovol'no na vsiu zhizn', chto ia umnee vas vsekh..." (VI, 333) But while trying to discover the new values all on her own, she shuns away not only from the influence of the past but also from the immediate present. Passing joys, pleasures and satisfactions do not appeal to her. She hardly has any possessions (V, 238-39), does not enjoy food,[60] does not try to have fun (V,309-10) or even keep herself busy, (V, 309-10). Although she is capable of being sociable, and can quickly and effectively do the work which she sets her mind upon, she usually remains idle. It would be fair to say that (not unlike Oblomov) she does not do any thing which in any way could be termed "killing time."

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[59](cont'd)heroines of Goncharov who were singled out for praise in the letter of the group of Russian women (Alekseev 258).

[60] Vera eats only little, and unlike Marfen'ka does not like sweets (VI, 49, 59).

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Although there are people whom Vera claims to love, such as the Grandmother or Marfen'ka, she even stays away from them. The house where she lives alone and where neither her privacy nor her ascetic tastes are interrupted by anyone or anything serves as a symbol of her independence and isolation. Vera's only true friends, the only people, as the narrative shows, whom she trusts, are not the members of her household or even people from her district, but a couple from across the Volga, a priest and his wife, who are virtually never shown in the novel. Their influence on Vera, however, seems quite pervasive: she visits them often and it looks as though she is on intimate terms with Natasha, the priest's wife (V, 300, VI, 312), who, according to the Grandmother, is young and elegant, while the priest is rather progressive and even smokes (VI, 80).

In her journey towards intellectual emancipation, Vera is far ahead of her predecessors in Goncharov's earlier works. Although her knowledge is based only on sporadic reading and casual information, her level of development seems unusual even to Raiskii, who had only just arrived from the capital and who is eager to encourage emancipation, but who initially only gets a proud rebuff from Vera. She begins by haughtily defending her own freedom (V, 301-304) and eventually speaks up against Raiskii's following her and openly admiring her beauty:

> - Zachem presleduete menia, smotrite takimi strannymi glazami? Chto vam nuzhno?
> - Mne nichego ne nuzhno: no ty sama dolzhna znat', kakimi drugimi glazami, kak ne zhadnymi,

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vliublennymi, mozhet muzhchina smotret' na tvoiu porazitel'nuiu krasotu...

- Ona ne dala emu dogovorit' vspykhnula i bystro vstala s mesta.

- Kak vy smeete govorit' èto? - skazala ona, gliadia na nego s nog do golovy. I on gliadel na nee s izumleniem, bol'shimi glazami.

- Chto s toboi, Vera: chto ia skazal?

- Vy, gordyi, razvitoi um, "rytsar' svobody", ne stydites' priznat'sia.

- Chto krasota vyzyvaet poklonenie i chto ia poklonialus' tebe: kakoe prestuplenie!

- Vy dazhe ne ponimaete, ia vizhu, kak èto oskorbitel'no! Osmelilis' by vy gliadet' na menia ètimi "zhadnymi" glazami, esli b okolo menia byl zorkii muzh, zabotlivyi otets, strogii brat? Net, vy ne gonialis' by za mnoi, ne dulis' by na menia po tselym dniam bes prichiny, ne podsmatrivali by kak shpion, i ne posiagali by na moi pokoi i svobodu! Skazhite, chem ia podala vam povod smotret' na menia inache, nezheli kak by smotreli vy na vsiakuiu druguiu, khorosho zashchishchenniui zhenshchinu?

- Krasota vozbuzhdaet udivlenie: èto ee pravo...

- Krasota, - perebila ona, - imeet takzhe pravo na uvazhenie i svobodu. (V, 352-53)

At this point Vera seems to speak not only for herself but also for all beautiful women who receive unsolicited attention from men.

Although Raiskii immediately falls passionately in love with his proud and beautiful cousin, their friendship does not develop until much later when he has finally given up hope of being loved in return. At the time of their first meeting Vera's closest friend is Mark (VI, 312-13), whom she meets secretly. The critics and the public of the time repeatedly expressed surprise at Vera's interest in Mark,[61] but there are several reasons to explain it. From their very first encounter Mark had treated her not with admiration,

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[61] See, for example, Skabichevskii in Poliakov 321 and VIII, 93-95.

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like Raiskii, nor with adoration, like Tushin, whom she also counted among her friends (VI, 312), but as an equal, which best suited Vera's own independent character.[62] Furthermore, in the conservative setting where Vera lived Mark, a nihilist and an eccentric, was different from anyone else she had ever met. He aroused her curiosity and in her search for personal freedom his lack of conventional ties acted as a challenge that inclined her in his favour.[63]

Besides being attracted to Mark personally, she was for a short time under the illusion that his radical ideology offered a possible alternative to the old, traditional beliefs (VI, 313-18). Very soon, however, she stops agreeing with him, and Mark discovers to his surprise that Vera is a strong and well informed opponent. Moreover, before long her clear mind and good judgement enable her to see the inconsistencies and weaknesses in Mark's nihilistic thought. She enjoys testing out her own ideas and values against his, and with success she even aspires to convert him to her own way of thinking.

But in the course of this seemingly safe process of debate, Vera's belief in herself and her lack of experience in dealing with men make her overlook a growing danger, a power beyond her control, an emotional "precipice" which gradually opens up before her as the result of her secret meetings with Mark. The danger is her growing love and

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[62] Cf. VI, 170-73 and VI, 98-99.
[63] Compare F.M. Dostoevskii, Zapiski iz podpol'ia ("Nauka," Leningrad 1973), V, 113.

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passion for this man, who is a declared partisan of temporary love, whereas Vera herself could see love between a man and a woman only in terms of eternal, permanent union and refuses to follow Mark against her own convictions:

> - Ne serdites', - skazala ona grudnym golosom, ot serdtsa, iskrenno, - ia soglashaius' s vami v tom chto kazhetsia mne verno i chestno, i esli neidu reshitel'no na ètu vashu zhizn' i na opyty, tak èto potomu, chto khochu sama znat' i videt', kuda idu.
> - To est' khochu rassuzhdat'!
> - Chego zhe vy trebuete? chtob ia ne rassuzhdala?
> - Chego, chego! - povtoril on, - vo pervykh, ia liubliu vas i trebuiu otveta polnogo... A potom ver'te mne i slushaites'! Razve vo mne men'she pyla i strasti, nezheli v vashem Raiskom, s ego poèziei? Tol'ko ia ne umeiu govorit' o nei poèticheski, da i ne nado. Strast' ne razgovorchiva... A vy ne verite, ne slushaetes'!..
> - Posmotrite, chego vy khotite, Mark: chtob ia byla glupee samoi sebia! Sami propovedovali svobodu, a teper' khotite byt' gospodinom i topaete nogoi, chto ia ne pokoriaius' rabski...
> - Esli u vas net doveriia ko mne, vas odolevaiut somneniia, ostavim drug druga, - skazal on, - tak nashi svidaniia prodolzhat'sia ne mogut...
> - Da, luchshe ostavim, - skazala ona reshitel'no, - a ia slepo nikomu i nichemu ne khochu verit', ne khochu! (VI, 178)

It is, however, at the very moment of what Vera believes to be a separation forever that she loses her self-control and her resistance (VI, 269-72) and almost before she knows it Mark carries her away to a secluded, hidden arbour where they spend several hours together. Although Vera's action here can be explained as a misunderstanding and wishful thinking which led her to believe that Mark had accepted her ideas, it looks more like a temporary victory of Vera's passion over her free will, whose power she had overestimated.

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Upon her return home alone after this episode, Vera is no more the same person as she had been before. Not only does she feel that she is a "fallen woman," but her sense of security, her faith in herself, is totally broken. Whereas before she felt that, as long as she herself knew what was right and wrong, she had a free choice and nothing to be afraid of, now she had found herself overpowered by a force beyond her control. She feels that she has been led by Mark into a defeat, and she cannot forgive either him or herself (VI, 307, 357). Being honest and proud, Vera does not make a secret of her mistake, but refuses the sincere sympathy and compassion of the people around her. To her, life seems to be over with no salvation or help possible from anywhere.[64]

In the end Vera's salvation comes from a source and in a manner that could be least expected. It is the traditional yet admirable Grandmother who shows the capacity of breaking out of her established patterns of behaviour and who makes the right and necessary decision (VI, 339). After the impressive violence of her initial reaction to Vera's disaster, the old woman discovers the only way to make Vera feel truly rehabilitated. To Vera's amazement, the Grandmother herself confesses a "sin" of her own youth, which for reasons beyond her control was never allowed to develop into a marriage (VI, 343-44). This unexpected confession gives Vera the necessary emotional help toward recovery. She suddenly discovers an image of a woman whose

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[64] See VI, 319, 328, 331, 338, 342, 349.

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life was an example of honesty, purity and respectability, and who yet could be accused of the so called "sin" (VI, 345).

From this point the relationship between Vera and the Grandmother takes a new turn. The secret which they have in common helps to bridge the difference in mentality, in prestige, and in age. Vera loses her previous diffidence and becomes appreciative, confident and docile. What is more, the two women not only become close friends, but equals:

> S babushkoi oni teper' - ne babushka s vnuchkoi, a dve podrugi, blizkie, ravnye nerazluchnye.
>
> Ona dazhe nechaianno nachala ei govorit' ty, kak i Raiskomu, kogda zagovorilo priamo serdtse, zabyvshee kholodnoe vy, i ona ostavit za soboi èto pravo. (VI, 345)

It should be noted that in this way the salvation of Vera does not come from a charitable and self-righteous person to a fallen one, but from an equal to an equal, and from a woman to a woman. This again echoes the outlook of those progressive feminists who believed that the improvement of the condition and the status of women should be the mission of women themselves and that help and advice should be offered neither with condescension nor with superiority.[65]

As mentioned earlier, the question of Fallen Women and the social injustice connected with it had bothered the

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[65] See Stites 64 and especially 65. Although women of this type did not call themselves "feminists," it is, as Stites, says, the only term that properly describes them. For the similarity with Agaf'ia and Anis'ia see note 36.

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author for a long time. In Obryv he uses all his powers of conviction and all the artistic devices at his disposal in an effort to reshape public opinion and incline it in favour of the woman. In various digressions by the narrator, or in the speeches of the main male character, Raiskii, the demand is made that women be treated with the same justice, fairness and equality as men.[66] The unusual and intricate structure of Obryv, which keeps the reader in the dark until the end about a major factor in the life of one of the central characters, the Grandmother, allows the author to give the problem an aura of timelessness, since it refers to the past as well as the present, and accordingly (in the person of Vera) suggests the future. It also deprives the event of its supposed sinfulness and elevates it into a complex experience, an undeserved suffering, which is capable of having an edifying and even sanctifying influence on a wowan's life.

The transformation of Vera into a meek follower of the Grandmother and what is referred to as her old truth has dissatisfied certain critics and suggested to some that Vera's change of character is not properly motivated.[67] One should be careful, however, not to confuse a change of character with a change in attitude and behaviour, for in her character Vera remains more than ever true to herself (in fact Goncharov's characters never undergo a true change of self). Vera is an extremist, for her it has to be all or

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[66] See, for example VI, 195-196, 335-336.
[67] Ehre 249.

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nothing, always or never. She is not capable of compromise or of adjusting to circumstances. Accordingly, after she has lost faith in the infallibility of her own powers and has become disillusioned in her own search for truth, she makes a full turn into the other extreme, and in this period of emotional convalescence she temporarily entrusts herself to the guidance of her new found friend, the Grandmother, and to the healing powers of the Grandmother's newly disclosed truth.

Indeed the Grandmother's similarities in character and mentality to Vera, which may easily pass unnoticed, make her look like Vera in more ways than one. The fact that she is referred to by her foster children as the Grandmother causes one to forget that Tat'iana Markovna Berzhkova has never been married, never had children of her own, and that her dignified and successful life is entirely of her own making. She contrasts particularly favourably with those unmarried 19th century women, often referred to as "old maids," who, as Stites says, were the object of genuine pity in Russian society, "literature being full of references to their eccentricities and foibles."[68] But, he continues, "however patronizing married folk were to unmarried women, the latter usually were well provided for by their families and were often a permanent member of the menage."[69]

It is not hard to see the extent to which the Grandmother differs from such women. In her situation as an

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[68] Stites 8.
[69] Stites 9.

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unmarried woman she succeeds not only in creating a full and independent life for herself, but contributes significantly to the well-being of others by taking care of her foster children and by efficiently looking after Raiskii's estate. Her situation of independence and responsibility puts her in not too different a class from the emancipated women of a later period, who insisted on taking care of their own life.

As a matter of fact, as a young woman she had shown as much independence as a gentry woman of the time could show. She had chosen herself the man she loved, and continued loving all her life, and she had set up her own, unconventional standards in their relationship, (VI, 411-12). But since marriage proved impossible, she refused any compromise and thus had to resign herself to the unenviable lot of an unmarried women.

Although the Grandmother had the right to feel that her life had been spoiled by other people, especially by the man whom she had first refused to marry,[70] she never blamed anyone. She has her own philosophy of life, which is expressed in simple, domestic terms, but which reflects a strong and individual conviction that it is the human being himself who is responsible for his life, both in its success and in its failure (V, 231-35). Accordingly, she is always ready to shoulder responsibility for what happens and does

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[70] It appears that her marriage was thwarted above all by the promise which she and Vatutin, the man she loved, had been forced to give to the jealous and unethical count whose proposal she had refused. According to another rumor, the Grandmother's parents had themselves refused Vatutin (VI, 411-12).

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not look for help or moral support from anyone. She reacts to a disaster, like Vera's mistake, with courage and determination, and overcomes the personal trauma on her own. The Grandmother is definitely not the type of woman who allows herself to be crushed, and it is surprising how little Raiskii understands her character, as evidenced by his dismay on seeing her quickly approach the river and his thinking, "Khochet utopit'sia" (VI, 323).[71] It is much more likely that the Grandmother was attracted to the water by the idea of purifying herself and washing off her sin. For, as she later says, "ia byla - kak okrashennyi grob sredi vas, a nvutri tailsia neomytyi grekh" (VI, 344). However, as soon as her self-imposed therapy (VI, 322-34) and her strenuous wandering enable her to gain control over her emotions, and she once again feels calm and clear headed, she concentrates directly on the problem and efficiently acts in the best interests of others.

The Grandmother's moral strength evokes the respect of all around her and is entirely due to her personal merits. Accordingly she supports the dignity of other women as well. Thus, when a male guest in her house, the rude but administratively highly placed Tychkov, insults another woman, she turns him out. Although this action later brings

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[71] In his speculation on the three women Raiskii is constantly mistaken. He is an intelligent person, and yet he repeatedly makes false assumptions about their principles of behaviour and they just as repeadtedly surprise him by their individuality and unpredictability. The same can be said about his estimate of Sof'ia, whom he considers a cold woman, but who, as we have already seen is above all disciplined and self-contained.

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unpleasant consequences, it deserves the praise of Raiskii and pleases Vera (VI, 26-27). Vera's reaction is commented upon by the Grandmother, who specifically stresses the similarity between herself and her independent and reserved grandniece: "My s neiu malo govorim, a pokhozhi drug na druga! - skazala Tat'iana Markovna" (VI, 27). The Grandmother's feeling of solidarity with her grandniece is confirmed on Vera's part by a growing awareness regarding Mark's modern thinking that

> ...vse to, chto bylo v ego propovedi dobrogo i vernogo, - ne novo, chto ono vziato iz togo zhe istochnika, otkuda cherpali i ne novye liudi, chto semena vsekh ètikh novykh idei, novoi "tsivilizatsii", kotoruiu on propovedoval tak khvastlivo i tainstvenno, zakliucheny v starom uchenii. (VI, 316)

Reminiscent, too of the Grandmother is Vera's insistence on only entertaining beliefs of which she is deeply convinced. As she says to Mark, "Ia veriu tomu, cho menia ubezhdaet" (VI, 171). As we can see from the novel, the Grandmother, both in her younger days and as an old woman, lives according to standards which she sets for herself and only believes in those things of which she is personally convinced. We need not be surprised that both the Grandmother and Vera, together with Marfen'ka, are capable of inspiring Raiskii's fantasy in which, according to the author's description, he sees majestic female figures who resemble the heroic women from the Bible, or from secular

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history, whether of the distant or the more recent past (VI, 324-26).[72] This galaxy of heroines is a fitting conclusion to the laudatory description of women in the three novels.

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[72] In his eulogy to women Raiskii mentions the wives of the Decembrists. A more detailed reference to them occurs in the travelogue "Po Vostochnoi Sibiri" (VII, 404-407), in which Goncharov mentions among other things their aristocratic upbringing, which remained unaffected even by the difficult conditions of their exile.

CHAPTER THREE

MOTHERS: A CATEGORY APART

There is a group of female characters in Goncharov who are less conspicuous than the heroines of the novels or than the central women characters of the shorter prose, and who are not usually elevated into prominence in the narrative or the plot, but who nevertheless embody attitudes and ideas that are of major importance for the understanding of some of Goncharov's dominant themes. These are the mothers, or those relatives (usually aunts) who act as mothers. In the novel Obryv, the foster mother is a great aunt and is significantly referred to as "the grandmother." As one of the major characters in the novel, she combines different aspects of personality which make her a figure of great stature and complexity. Among these aspects her role as an educator and foster mother are among the most important and will be discussed later in the chapter.

The mother's character and the influence it has on the mentality of the children, on their psyche and their memories, is particularly important in the novels. Not surprisingly, as critics have noted, it is of equal importance in the author's own life. Goncharov apparently had a profound attachment to his mother,[1] and Milton Ehre notes that Goncharov's adoration and admiration for this

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[1] Utevskii 12, 53, 56, Ehre 6.

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highly efficient woman is reflected in his depiction of Aleksandr Aduev's mother in Obyknovennaia istoriia, of the grandmother in Obryv, and also of Agaf'ia Matveevna in Oblomov.[2] Francois de Labriolle claims that all of Goncharov's novels end in failure and suggests as a possible explanation for this the author's personal domestic disappointments connected with his mother.[3]

Whatever we think about specific biographical reflections in the novels, there is no doubt that Goncharov had a profound attachment to his mother, and that this feeling acted as a general source of inspiration in his fiction. One should, however, be careful not to over-emphasize the importance of this influence, since such characters in Goncharov's works also conform to historical reality. Furthermore, they have an independent artistic justification and significance.

In the 19th century being a mother was almost an official duty for a young married woman from the gentry class. Richard Stites, among others, has carefully documented this expectation.[4] In reality, of course, not all women took this duty seriously. Some of them did not even seem to be aware that they had any duties at all; others gave their mission some peculiar, almost perverse interpretation, and exercised a tight system of control and

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[2] Ehre 7.
[3] F. de Labriolle, 193-196.
[4] Stites 6-9. For an exhaustive treatment of the condition of women in the first half of the 19th century see ibid., 3-25.

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discipline, at the same time remaining almost strangers to the children themselves.

Goncharov was obviously very much aware of these attitudes, and of the limitations which they tended to produce. He portrays a great number of different cases which exemplify a variety of commonly found situations as well as more extreme cases. At the same time, his works reflect the gradual evolution of mother-child relationships, the later works testifying to a growing friendliness and intimacy between some of the elders and their juniors, the informality of which, when compared to the standards of the traditional past, amounted to a breach of authority.

On the whole it is accurate to say that, with few exceptions, Goncharov's mothers can be divided into two distinct categories. The first are the loving mothers, those who are often overindulgent, overprotective and blind in their devoted affection. The second group comprises what one might call loveless mothers, the ones whose relationship lacks affection and understanding. In this case mother and child are near strangers to one another: the formal distance of their relationship follows the pattern and code of polite social behaviour.

Although in Goncharov's portrayal each category is above all determined by the individual traits of the persons involved, it is nevertheless true that women of the middle class gentry whose lives are limited to their country estates generally belong to the first, affectionate group.

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On the other hand, women of the upper class city society tend to belong to the second group. This can be related to a general dichotomy between country and city ways: the typical warmth, friendliness and generosity of feeling of country people as opposed to the cold reserve and egoism of city folk is a topos of Russian literature.

Among those mothers who belong to the first category the most memorable are Aleksandr's mother, Adueva, in Obyknovennaia istoriia and Oblomov's mother in "Son Oblomova." These women epitomize the image of a "country mother." For them the love and care of their child (more specifically their male child) is the major factor in their existence.

The father, the man of the household, may be physically present in the home, but in Goncharov's picture the child grows up having almost no contact with him. His presence is not without influence, but his role is passive, indolent, and indecisive. This situation, best seen in Oblomov, has its effect on the children.

On the other hand, the mothers, being active and energetic women, consciously and methodically mould the character of the child into what they consider the perfect image of the lucky possessor of both fortune and noble birth, and use all their energies, knowledge and phantasy for what they believe is the child's own good. The drawback is that their knowledge is limited, while their imagination is boundless.

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One should not, however, be led to believe that this capacity in women for phantasy and invention was only a weakness. On the contrary, it was one of their strengths, a trick up their sleeves, which they used to explain an otherwise mysterious phenomenon, to embellish a dreary existence, to escape into a glorious if unknown future. Furthermore, their own sense of the practical was in no way affected by this imaginary world. Even while trying to insulate their children from all contacts with crude, everyday reality, on the practical level of daily life they themselves remained realistic and calculating.

In fact, within the narrow sphere of their household, they were truly competent. Here they could feel safe and well informed, while the outside world presented challenges with which they were unable to cope and for which any knowledge they could acquire was bound to be inadequate. For them their domestic world was their stronghold, and it was to this world that they tried to keep their child attached. By consciously trying to keep him happy at home and by unconsciously making him helpless to deal with the outside world, they increased their chances of having him around as an adult for a longer time, if not for good. A limited view of life and a limited experience would effectively discourage a child from exploring the world much further and thus encountering a sense of inadequacy and dissatisfaction. In Goncharov's portrayal, a female environment, beneficial as it might be in other ways, had its severe limitations.

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For the child the benefit of such an atmosphere of illusion and escape was the feeling of security and affection that went along with it: in some cases this would help him to grow into a gentle, altruistic person, expecting no evil and believing that the world would always be kind to him. The drawback of this might be that in adulthood he would be unable to cope with difficulties or even stand up to protect himself.

Examples of an education dominated by such mothers can be seen in Aleksandr Aduev, before the uncle steps in to interfere, and in Oblomov, whose childhood left the most profound traces on his character. Critics, especially in Russia, have tended to ascribe this important theme of faulty upbringing to Goncharov's negative attitude to what they generally refer to as the historical condition of old Russia. It seems preferable, however, not to restrict such a situation to any specific time or place. Since Goncharov transcends historical circumstance, what he says can have the most general application.

It was Belinskii who, in his "Vzgliad na russkuiu literaturu 1847 goda," made particularly favourable comments on Goncharov's talent as displayed in his depiction of the mothers in his first published work, Obyknovennaia istoriia:

> Mat' molodogo Adueva i mat' Naden'ki - obe starukhi, obe ochen' dobry, obe ochen' liubiat svoikh detei, i obe ravno vredny svoim detiam, nakonets, obe glupy i poshly. A mezhdu tem èto dva litsa sovershenno razlichnye: odna barynia provintsial'naia starogo veka, nichego ne chitaet i nichego ne ponimaet, krome melochei khoziaistva: slovom dobraia vnuchka zloi gosphozhi Prostakovoi; drugaia - barynia

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> stolichnaia, kotoraia chitaet frantsuzskie knizhki, nichego ne ponimaet, krome melochei khoziaistva, slovom, dobraia pravnuchka zloi gospozhi Prostakovoi. V izobrazhenii takikh ploskikh i poshlykh lits, lishennykh vsiakoi samostoiatel'nosti i original'nosti, inogda luchshe vsego vyskazyvaetsia talant, potomu chto vsego trudnee oboznachit' ikh chem-nibud' osobennym.[5]

Such criticism gives only a partial, one-sided appraisal of Goncharov's characters. It evaluates them in the light of previous literature, emphasizes their weaknesses, denies them any achievements and on the human level deprives them of any real value. The judgement, therefore, sounds curt and harsh, and although other critics have added passing comments on the two mothers, Belinskii's statements have never been adequately tested. It seems appropriate, then, to begin our examination of mothers in Goncharov with Obyknovennaia istoriia.

Among all the mothers portrayed or referred to by Goncharov, Adueva is the one who gets the most complete and exhaustive treatment both as an individual and as a type. It is in connection with her that the author makes an extended digression in the form of a general statement applicable to any loving mother whose grown up and successful son is often unwilling to share his joys with the aging parent:

> Bednaia mat'! vot tebe i nagrada za tvoiu liubov'! Togo li ozhidala ty? V tom-to i delo, chto materi ne ozhidaiut nagrad. Mat' liubit bez tolku i bez razboru. Veliki vy, slavny, krasivy, gordy, perekhodit imia vashe iz ust v usta, gremiat vashi dela po svetu - golova starushki triasetsia ot radosti, ona plachet, smeetsia i molitsia dolgo i zharko. A synok, bol'sheiu chast'iu, i ne dumaet

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[5] Belinskii III, 813-14.

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> podelit'sia slavoi s roditel'nitseiu. Nishchi li vy dukkhom i umom, otmetila li vas priroda kleimom bezobraziia, tochit li zhalo neduga vashe serdtse ili telo, nakonets ottalkivaiut vas ot sebia liudi i net vam mesta mezhdu nimi - tem bolee mesta v serdtse materi. Ona sil'nee prizhimaet k gruidi urodlivoe, neudavsheesia chado i molitsia eshche dolee i zharche. (I, 10)

'Adueva fully justifies this comment. Her simple, unsophisticated nature allows her instinctive feelings to develop in the most natural way, unhindered either by education or by complexity of character. But if, following Belinskii, we compare her to Prostakova in Fonvizin's Nedorosl', we can see that the only aspect these two women have in common as mothers is their instinctive, almost animal love which manifests itself in their continuous urge to feed and to protect their grownup sons. The fact that neither is cultivated narrows their mental horizons and accentuates the primitiveness of their feelings, but does not produce other similarities either in character or in behaviour. Adueva is morally a much finer person.

We may ask how far the author goes in justifying this motherly devotion and what response he expects from the son in return. Certainly he seems to favour the son's desire to free himself from the tight circle of the family world which could stifle and limit his personal development. On the other hand, he obviously considers it the duty of a loving son to keep regular contacts with the mother by writing to her regularly. He makes his most rational and least sentimental character in Obyknovennaia istoriia, Aduev the

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uncle, a spokesman for this view. The uncle sternly reproaches Aleksandr for not writing to the mother for four months and reminds him of the grief it causes her:

> - Nu, skazhi, liubish' li ty svoiu mat'?
> Aleksandr vdrug ozhil.
> -Kakoi vopros? - skazal on, - kogo posle ètogo liubit' mne? Ia ee obozhaiu, ia otdal by za nee zhizn'...
> -Khorosho. Stalo byt', tebe izvestno, chto ona zhivet, dyshit tol'ko toboiu, chto vsiakaia tvoia radost' i gore - radost' i gore dlia nee. Ona teper' vremia schitaet ne mesiatsami, ne nedeliami, a vestiami o tebe i ot tebia...Skazhi-ka, davno li ty pisal k nei?
> Aleksandr vstrepenulsia.
> -Nedeli... tri, - probormotal on.
> -Net: chetyre mesiatsa! Kak prikazhesh' nazvat' takoi postupok? Nu-ka, kakoi ty zver'? Mozhet byt', ottogo i ne nazyvaesh, chto u Krylova takogo net.
> - A chto? - vdrug s ispugom sprosil Aleksandr.
> - A to, chto starukha bol'na s goria.
> -Uzheli? Bozhe! bozhe!
> -Nepravda! nepravda! - skazala Lizaveta ALeksandrovna i totchas pobezhala k biuro i dostala ottuda pis'mo, kotoroe podala Aleksandru.- Ona ne bol'na, no ochen' toskuet. (I, 167-68)

Only when the uncle sees that Aleksandr has absorbed his lesson does he add a kindly word to excuse his temporary forgetfulness. Presumably the author, while making his own attitude quite clear, did not want to end the matter in an intransigent way.[6]

To return to Adueva, the reader is allowed to see her

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[6] Goncharov's view on this matter corresponds to the attitude of sociologists today. See, for example, Pauline Bart, "The loneliness of the long-distance mother" in Jo Freeman, ed., Women, a feminist perspective (Palo Alto 1975) 167, who says that those women who play a traditional role and whose lives are centered around their children are those who are most prone to depression when their children leave and that it is important that the mother continue to receive frequent phone calls (the modern equivalent of letters) and visits.

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in two different phases of her life. Moreover, she is twice shown on occasions of profound personal significance. The first is the departure of her only son Aleksandr to Petersburg, the second his return from there eight years later. Both occasions present ample cause for the arousal of powerful emotions and hence enable the author to portray Adueva not only in the routine of her usual setting but also at moments of extreme stress when her reactions best reveal her real nature.

Structurally, the two episodes frame a major event and a major theme of the novel, the independent venturing of Aleksandr into the unkown, outside world in order to test his powers and develop into a fully self-aware and self-sufficient human being capable of living his own life. For the mother the two events frame a period of long and painful separation from her son for an indefinite time. She actually has reasons to doubt whether she will ever see him again before her death. After a while she fears there will be no one to bury her (I, 20).

Adueva's personal loneliness and isolation afer her son has gone is easy to imagine. She lives in the country surrounded mainly by her servants and serfs without any real friends or relatives. The person she trusts the most and whom she considers a close and valuable friend is a worthless man and a sponger, Anton Ivanovich, whose unsavoury characteristics are unsparingly catalogued by the author. His crude manners, cynicism, avidity and sly

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inquisitiveness would be repulsive to anyone who looked at him at all critically. He is nevertheless received and even appreciated in most homes, including Adueva's, since his pervasive presence offers an escape from an even greater solitude and loneliness.

Although Anton Ivanovich is an amusing and well portrayed minor character in his own right, he also contributes substantially to our impression of Adueva's own character. Not only does he serve as the main representative of her social milieu, but his petty ways and lack of any sincere feeling act as a contrast to her. The profound sincerity of her emotions and her helplessness in the face of what is bound to happen stand out all the more prominently against the foil of Anton's superficiality and vulgarity. This is not the only occasion when Goncharov contrasts a basically good woman with a negative male character.[7]

On the other hand, Adueva's sentiments of love and sadness are parallelled in a modified way by the feelings of another woman who is also morally good. This is Agrafena, the housekeeper, who has to be separated from a man she loves, Aleksandr's valet Evsei, who is also leaving for Petersburg together with his master. But whereas Adueva's affection for her son is expressed in the gentleness and tenderness with which she addresses him, Agrafena's grief is expressed in outbursts of loud, rude words which she showers

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[7] As, for example, Agaf'ia Pshenitsina and her brother.

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on the sad departing Evsei. Both women are completely impotent to prevent the dreaded separation. In Adueva's case, however, it is caused by Aleksandr's desire to leave, while in Agrafena's case it is determined by Adueva's insistence that her son be entrusted to Evsei's care in particular. Neither woman shows any open resentment at these decisions. The passive submissiveness of both was typical of those conditions when resigned acceptance was the only possible action for many women and for a number of men.

It seems that Adueva, basically a kind woman, is not even aware of the grief which she herself is causing to others as long as it suits her goals. It may even be the case that Agrafena's dissatisfaction, which her mistress cannot help noticing, helps her to come to terms with her own loss. Perhaps she takes solace in the fact that she is not the only one to be struck by an unpleasant turn of events which she cannot avert.

Each episode, the departure and the return, marks in itself a turning point in Aleksandr's life. Each is the beginning of a new phase and the end of an old one. For the mother, these are the moments when she not only tries to cope with her own emotions, but above all tries in the case of her son's departure to penetrate the future with her mind and, in the case of his return, to comprehend the past. For her this is not easy, since the place where he is going is virtually unknown to her. Thus on his departure she tries to use all the foresight and common sense she can muster to

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help him with her advice, and upon his return she tries to remedy the damage which, as she believes, his absence has caused him.

The complete, methodical absorption with which Adueva provides for that period of absence when she will not be able personally to watch over her son's material welfare and safety is most revealing of her selfless love for Aleksandr. It is worth noting that she does not threaten or complain or indulge in self pity. Her sadness seems almost a physical reaction, an emotion she is almost ashamed of, a hindrance in those precious moments which she needs in order to finish doing and saying the things she finds important. Hence, the description of Adueva's emotional reactions emphasizes their spontaneous nature and details her efforts to control them. So, for example, her voice would at times betray her ("golos ei izmenit" I, 4), her tears would start dropping ("slezy zakapali u nee iz glaz" I, 14), or at the sight of the carriage that takes her son away she beomes pale, her legs give way and and hands hang limp ("u nei pdkosilis' nogi i opustilis' ruki" I, 7). Such are the physical manifestations of the emotions that are beyond her control, but instead of indulging in them, or perhaps capitalizing on them, she wipes the tears quickly from her eyes and tries to regain her composure.

It is only at the very moment of saying farewell that she really clings to her son and bursts out weeping. In its general mood and setting the scene reminds one of the

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departure scene in Taras Bulba.[8] But Goncharov treats the situation differently. He briskly interrupts the developing drama of farewell with the unexpected intrusion of a friend who at the last moment extends his good wishes and channels the emotions into various minor but effusive farewell embraces. The author also portrays the affectionate and tender blessing which Evsei's mother gives her son, a blessing that falls into the same general pattern of instructions, advice, and sadness and which helps to fix the generic element in separations between mothers and sons.

Although love for the son is by far the most dominant trait of Adueva, other aspects of her character come out clearly from her handling of the day of departure. At this point she is still an agile woman, temperamental, even rude when her wishes are not satisfied. She is extremely well organized and practical, aware of the value of money and perfectly capable of managing her own estate. She has good self control and does not let her emotions interfere with her clear thinking. While talking with her son she follows a definite strategy, a plan which she carries out to its conclusion. First she tries to imply tenderly that at home he can have his every wish satisfied, then she draws his attention to the beauty and charm of their estate and provides him with an efficient and detailed account of the benefits it can offer. However, after she realizes that this last attempt to retain her son has failed, she completely

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[8] N.V. Gogol, Sobranie sochinenii (Moscow 1960) II, 53-57.

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gives up the topic and just as methodically begins to prepare him for his departure. She attends to every detail in his life away from home: clothing, money, career, health, women and even religion.

There is a great variety of tone in her monologues on this occasion. Although Adueva's speech remains all the time coherent, sober and goal oriented, it still reflects her stream of thought. Thus she digresses to generalize on character, to make incidental recollections, or to express the greatness of her sacrifice and the intenseness of her concern for her son (I, 12-14).

Furthermore, Goncharov shows that Adueva is capable of calculated and far reaching plans. Her ambitions regarding her son and her tendency to daydream do not deprive her of real foresight. For, some seventeen years earlier, she had already envisaged the possibility of her son's trip to Petersburg. That was when the uncle Aduev, then himself a young man, was in turn leaving for the capital. She not only saw him off with warmth and cordiality, like a relative, but already put in a word in favour of her infant son, asking the uncle to be of help if the need arose:

> Tut kstati Adev vspomnil, kak, semnadtsat' let nazad, pokoinyi brat i ta zhe Anna Pavlovna otpravliali ego samogo. Oni, konechno, ne mogli nichego sdelat' dlia nego v Peterburge, on sam nashel sebe dorogu... no on vspomnil ee slezy pri proshchan'e, ee blagosloveniia, kak materi, ee laski, ee pirogi i, nakonets, ee poslednie slova: "Vot, kogda vyrastet Sashen'ka - togda eshche trekhletnii rebenok, - mozhet byt' i vy, bratets,

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prilaskaete ego..." (I, 32)[9]

Although at the time this must have seemed to the uncle a casual remark, for Adueva it was part of a careful plan. At the time when Aleksandr was only three years old, she already invested the attention and care which in the future could help her son in his career and pave the way for him into his uncle's Petersburg home. Later, when the time comes and Aleksandr indeed decides to go to Petersburg, she tries to be of help again, and loads the son with a carefully selected assortment of gifts, a variety of bribery intended to win the uncle's favour. And although by then the uncle has lost all interest in his country relative and in the attractions of the local produce, the mother's careful foresight is not wasted and serves as a direct motivation for the uncle to receive and assist Aleksandr.

From all of the above we can see that by nature Adueva is a strong, determined woman, devoted in her deep feelings, consistent and dignified in her behaviour, and capable of clear thought. Of course she also reflects the typical limiations of her time and class. Her occasional simple-mindedness, her superstition and the naiveté of her assumptions are alternately amusing and pitiful, but always understandable. The low level of her general knowledge, reflecting above all the influence of her immediate surroundings and of the church sermons, is explained by an unstimulating environment which could hardly promote the

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[9] See also I, 12.

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personal development of a woman who, in other circumstances, might be expected to achieve much more. Adueva exemplifies the truly traditional Russian woman of the olden days, one who does not question the real value of her existence or demand the right to live her life to the full.

When the reader sees her eight years later, he recognizes the familiar absorption of which she is capable. She sits waiting for her son to arrive. The intensity of her expectation is powerfully described: "Vdrug glaza ee zablistali; vse sily ee dushi i tela pereshli v zrenie: na doroge chto-to zachernelo" (I, 268).

Just as the intensity of her own feelings remains unchanged, so she expects Aleksandr himself to be unchanged as well. But when she finds that he neither looks nor behaves as he did years ago, her disappointment and rage turn first against Evsei and then, in an avalanche of primitive and ridiculous abuse, against the uncle, and even more against his innocent wife, for not having adequately looked after her treasured boy.

> - Chtob emu pusto bylo! - skazala, pliunuv, Anna Pavovna. - Svoikh by postreliat narodil, da i rugal by! Chem by uniat', a on..Gospodi, Bozhe moi, tsar' miloserdyi! - voskliknula ona, - na kogo nynche nadeiat'sia, koli i rodnye svoi khuzhe dikogo zveria? Sobaka, i ta berezhet svoikh shcheniat, a tut diadia izvel rodnogo plemiannika! A ty, durachina ètakoi, ne mog diadiushke-to skazat' chtob on ne izvolil tak laiat'sia na barina, a otvalival by proch. Krichal by na zhenu svoiu, merzavku ètakuiu! Vidish', nashel kogo rugat': "Rabotai, rabotai!" Sam by okoleval nad rabotoi! Sobaka, pravo, sobaka, prosti gospodi! Kholopa nashel rabotat'!
>
> Za ètim posledovalo molchanie. (I, 278-79).

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Obviously Adueva's instinctive protectiveness has not diminished over all those years which both she and Aleksandr have lived through.

After this initial protest and helpless revolt against her son's long absence, it becomes Adueva's main desire to revive the past and help Aleksandr become again what he was before. She offers him every available remedy, food, medicine, prayer, even witchcraft, to erase the effects of his life away from her. And although in the beginning Aleksandr shied away from this new wave of care which met him, gradually it appeared to have a favourable effect on his basically strong, healthy and friendly nature. Outwardly, at least, the mother had succeeded in reaching her goal.

Her other strong desire, apart from keeping him in the country for good, was to see him married and with children. In this way, obviously, he could replace the void in his existence by new values, while she in turn could reinforce her own identity by taking on the role of grandmother:

> - A u menia est' na primete devushka - tochno kukolka: rozoven'kaia, nezhnen'kaia; tak, kazhetsia, iz kostochki v kostochku mozzhechok i perelivaetsia. Taliia takaia tonen'kaia, stroinaia; uchilas' v gorde, v pansione. Za nei sem'desiat piat' dush da dvadtsat' piat' tysiach den'gami...A? Sashen'ka? Ia uzh s mater'iu raz za kofeem razgovorilas', da shutia i zabrosila slovechko: u nei, kazhetsia, i ushki na makushke ot radosti...
> - Ia ne zhenius, - povtoril Aleksandr.
> - Kak, nikogda?
> - Nikogda.
> - Gospodi pomilui! chto zh iz ètogo budet? Vse liudi, kak liudi, tol'ko ty oddn bog znaet na kogo pokhozh! A mne-to by radost' kakaia! privel by bog ponianchit' vnuchat. Pravo, zhenis' na nei; ty ee

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poliubish... (I, 285)

Here again we see that Adueva has considered all the details: looks, education, money, prestige. But since Aleksandr refuses to consider marriage, the mother, as in the past, fully abandons all attempts to influence the organization of his life. In this later phase in the life of the two Aduevs there are no plans made, no reaching into the future. For the mother it is a period above all oriented towards the past, while for Aleksandr it is merely a temporarly lull, the coming to the end of one cycle in preparation for a new beginning parallel to his initial journey to Petersburg eight years earlier.

While musing on the past, Adueva gives a sketchy picture of herself and her husband living together as a happy couple shortly before Aleksandr's birth. In this way the reader can get a glimpse of her at still another period, when she was still young, loved, and happily married.

> - Vot èti lipy,- govorila ona, ukazyvaia na sad; - sazhal tvoi otets. Ia byla beremenna toboi. Sizhu, byvalo, zdes' na balkone da smotriu na nego. On porabotaet, porabotaet da vzglianet na menia, a pot tak gradom i l'et s nego. "A! ty tut? - molvit, - to-to mne tak veselo rabotat'!" - i opiat' primetsia. (I, 289)

One can see from this parapraph that, unlike his brother (the uncle), Aleksandr's father enjoyed being a gentleman farmer and was also an affectionate husband. We also know that Aleksandr looked like him (I, 33) and that he must accordingly have been a pleasant looking man. Had it

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not been for her widowhood, Adueva could have been a happily married woman. It is not difficult to imagine her in her young days. The author vividly portrays her spontaneity, her outbursts of temper and the youthful freshness of her reactions, so that one can readily believe that her character has not changed much. Nevertheless, this brief glimpse into the past makes one realize that the premature death of her husband must have indeed drastically changed her life.

Several critics have commented on what they consider the unusual or even awkward way in which Goncharov introduces the fact of Adueva's death. Some explain this by a general lack of sympathy for the mother, others by the author's personal fearlessness before death.[10] But whatever the external factors, it seems that the author's treatment is innovative and artistic, ant totally in character. With Aleksandr's growing desire to leave again for Petersburg, the cycle of events approaches its completion - departure, absence, return - and is ready to enter again a similar phase. But whereas for the son, as before, the planned new departure suggests a new start, for the mother it can only promise an end. By now she knows through experience that while her son is away she can be of no use to him, and her own existence without him seems as good as death to her anyway (I, 11). And since, as common sense suggests, still another, later meeting at her age is hard to believe in,

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[10] See Belinskii III, 827-28; D.S. Merezhkovskii 35.

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Adueva's reason for living indeed reaches the point of complete extinction.

Therefore, even before Aleksandr takes courage and finds a way of informing her about his determination to leave for the capital for a second time, she, one might say, takes the initiative and dies. Goncharov puts it in no equivocal terms:

> "I chto ia zdes' delaiu? - s dosadoi govoril on, - za chto vianu? Zachem gasnut moi darovaniia? Pochemu mne ne blistat' tam svoim trudom?.. Teper' ia stal rassuditel'nee. Chem diadiushka luchshe menia? Razve ia ne mogu otyskat' sebe dorogi? Nu, ne udalos' do sikh por, ne za svoe bralsia - chto zh? opomnilsia teper': pora, pora. No kak ogorchit moi ot'ezd matushku! A mezhdu tem neobkodimo ekhat'; nel'zia zhe pogibnut' zdes'! Tam tot i drugoi - vse vyshli v liudi... A moia kar'era, a fortuna?.. ia tol'ko odin otstal... da za chto zhe? da pochemu zhe? On metalsia ot toski i ne znal, kak skazat' materi o namerenii ekhat'.
>
> No mat' vskore izbavila ego ot ètogo truda: ona umerla. (I, 292).

This laconic statement, which leaves so much unsaid, eloquently conveys by its very understatement the unexpressed awareness of her son's feelings and of the inevitability of a new separation which Adueva must have had and adds a finishing touch to her characterization as an utterly devoted mother. When she had at one time expressed her readiness even to give her life, if that were necessary, for Aleksandr's happiness (I, 14) it was not a pose or a mere phrase. For the happiness and serenity of her son not even her life was too high a price.

As previously mentioned, another woman who can be considered in the same category as Adueva is the mother of

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Oblomov. In fact the two have an identical way of life, similar interests and a similar attitude to their only sons. Oblomova, however, is portrayed as a young woman, while we only get a glimpse of Adueva at this phase in her life.

It is significant that, although Goncharov makes a point of mentioning the complex names of several members of the household who populate Oblomovka, as well as those of some acquaintances, he refers to Oblomova exclusively by her status, whether as mother, wife, barynia or khoziaika, depending on the circumstances. We have already briefly sketched her qualities as a mother: she is loving, tender, even ardent. But in order to fully appreciate her as a mother we should also consider her other roles.

Although in 19th century Russia the father and husband was officially the master, the unshakeable head of the family, most of the gentry husbands, as Stites has noted, were neither despotic nor even authoritative, but were usually "effectively ruled by domineering wives."[11] We are not allowed to see enough of Oblomova to judge conclusively whether such words are fully applicable to her as a wife. Nevertheless, one does get the impression that it was she who was the boss in the family and that the husband, although seemingly satisfied, was under her thumb. Whenever he speaks, little as he does, the wife interrupts and puts him to shame for what she sees as a mistake or an inaccurate piece of information. When he tries to philosophize, she

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[11] Stites 6-8.

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quickly puts an end to it by intimidating the husband and sternly saying that one should pray more and think less (IV, 133,134,136).

As the lady of the house, Khoziaika, she is active and sociable. She likes company, holidays and guests. What is more important, in her daily routine she is, one might say, cozy and comfortable, spreading peace, warmth and stability. In her home she is a real mistress and she even protects her territorial rights from outside intrusions. When a letter is brought from the outside world she feels angry, indignant (IV, 139). Oviously she would be happy to prevent all communication with a world that is outside of her sphere of control and which presents no interest to her whatsoever. Accordingly she delays the answer to the letter by finding a ready excuse and by discouraging her husband from sending a reply (IV, 140-41). As usual, father Oblomov feels no impulse to contradict his wife. Indeed, on some occasions her determination even strikes fear into him (IV, 134). Oblomova is a woman of character, and although her role in the novel is secondary and parenthetical, the importance of her influence and upbringing on the temperament and destiny of her son is easy to image and believe.

But not all loving mothers had such influence over their progeny. The mother of Naden'ka Liubetskaia, mentioned earlier in Belinskii's comment on Obyknovennaia istoriia, is a case in point. Naden'ka's mother is different in other ways as well. Firstly, she is not a country dweller, but a

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member of middle-class Petersburg society. Furthermore, she is the mother of a daughter, not a son. Finally, as a person she does not have the strong, determined will of Adueva or of Oblomova. But there are also similarities, for in her ways and manners she is quite traditional and in this resembles the country people. This is perhaps why Goncharov portrays her mainly in her summer house (dacha), which suits her best, since it is a middle ground between city and country. The Western spirit of Petersburg has only touched her on the surface. She reads French books and has heard about the more liberated behaviour of some women outside of Russia, but her attitude is negative and suspicious: the outward manifestations of the growing freedom leave her perplexed (I, 112). However her daughter, Naden'ka, who is independent and strong willed, leaves her with little say about her unorthodox behaviour and her choice of admirers.

One could say that as an author Goncharov is not kind to Mrs. Liubetskaia. In describing her appearance he notes the unsightly but memorable detail of a wart on her nose and tells about her behaviour with grotesque humour. In a later article "Luchshe pozdno, chem nikogda" (VIII, 74) he specifically says that compared to the daughter the mother is weak and is herself aware of this weakness and of the shortsightedness that prevents her from adequately guiding her daughter. Other critics have not much to add to this comment.

One may well ask why Goncharov, who is usually so

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charitable to women, portrays Liubetskaia so pitilessly in her tactlessness and absurdity and why Naden'ka, so lively and likeable, is burdened with such an imbecile for a mother. Age alone cannot explain the difference. It is therefore possible to see the mother's naive behaviour as a pose, a sly device. Slyness is traditionally the weapon of the weak,[12] and hence is often used by women. It is obvious that, in the absence of internal strength and authority, Liubetskaia must resort to slyness if she is to retain even a modicum of influence over her daughter.

By behaving in her simple-minded fashion, she can keep a diplomatic neutrality and neither forbid nor endorse her independent daughter's actions, including the solitary evening walks with an ardent young suitor or horseback riding in the company of a count whose intentions are questionable. She does, however, keep watch with a vigilant eye. For example, when the daughter's absence in the evening becomes too long, she summons her back home with a down to earth excuse: "Prostokvasha davno na stole" (I, 98). Whereas to the elated young man this invitation may seem insultingly prosaic, for the mother's purposes it is just what is needed.

With the count, Liubetskaia's feelings seem confused. After all, she had taken the initiative in introducing him to her daughter (I, 104). Obviously the attentions of a wealthy and glamorous aristocrat flatter the mother and she

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[12] This agrees with Mikhailov III, 399.

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would be more than happy to see the relationship blossom into a legitimate union. But since she is far from sure that such a fortunate thing will happen, she does her very best to retain the other, more reliable suitor as an alternative. Thus, in her relationship with Aleksandr she compensates with exaggerated cordiality for the daughter's growing coolness and, employing one of her daughter's sly tricks,[13] she turns the table on him by saying that it was he who was neglecting them. With both men she faithfully tries to act in her daughter's interests and to protect her. It seems that Naden'ka is aware of her mother's feelings, for, in moments of insecurity, it is by her mother's side that she chooses to find refuge (I, 115). This mother exercises no true authority and has difficulty in keeping up with her daughter's unorthodox, almost progressive whims. Nevertheless, her presence is more than a formality, since it offers the daughter a non-critical moral support on which she can rely and serves as a reminder, however weak, of the wisdom of the past which she might otherwise have discarded even more quickly.

Opposed to those women who take true interest and pride in their children and allow full rein to their motherly feelings is another group of women who do not manifest the affection normally expected from a mother. These are, for example, the mothers of Iuliia in Obyknovennaia istoriia, of Sof'ia in Obryv, and other minor figures. The portrayal of

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[13] Compare I, 92 and I, 111.

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such women is usually brief, sketchy, or only implicit, being intended primarily to point to the imperfections of the education they provide and the emotional harm their attitude can cause their children (mainly their daughters).

As mentioned previously, mothers of this type generally belong to the upper class city society. It would be wrong to say that they totally lack interest in their children, but their interest is motivated not so much by affection as by social demands. They check on their manners and their dress, and, when the time comes, they accompany their girls to social gatherings in order to introduce them to society and find for them an impressive husband. They also hire foreign governesses and tutors to chaperone and teach their daughters. But the education and company provided by the tutors whom such parents hire is of dubious value. For example, Iuliia Tafaeva, in Obyknovennaia istoriia, had a mother whose choice in tutors was guided almost exclusively by looks and general elegance. The results, as one could see, were both comic and pathetic.[14] In describing Iuliia's upbringing the author makes it plain that the superficial values of a lightheaded mother, even when balanced by a more judicious father, can affect the daughter's whole personality. The mother of Elena in Schastlivaia oshibka also belongs to this category. As the story shows, Elena's mother and father are both reluctant to break away from their social chat and their cards to give their blessing to

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[14] On Tafaeva's education see I, 199-204.

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such an important event as their daughter's news of a marriage proposal (I, 459). Although the parents do go through the required motions, and the father even expresses his satisfaction, there is no record of any special words or actions on the part of the mother. In this case silence is significant: as a mother she hardly even exists.

The extreme case of such an upbringing deprived of all human manifestations and closeness is to be found in the character of Sof'ia Belovodova in Obryv. What in the other instances is the result of a mother's indifference or oversight in this instance is a system pursued quite consciously, with obsession and without mercy.

As one can see from Obryv, this type of education was particularly characteristic of the small fraction of the upper class who belonged to the oldest Russian nobility and who were frequently untitled.[15] Being a member of one of these families constituted in the eyes of their representatives an honour and source of pride which could not be matched by any newly acquired titles, personal merit, or fortune. They were a privileged, self-contained group, a fact which put them in a special position and which imposed special obligations. Their unwritten ancestral code had rigid rules which regulated their daily behaviour and the whole plan of their life, and those who broke these rules

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[15] See A.M. Skabichevskii, "Staraia pravda" in Poliakov 277-329. The critic makes an analogy between the way of life portrayed by Goncharov in Obryv and the ancestral traditions of the world of antiquity. He also discusses Goncharov's novel in the light of this theory and points out weaknesses in Goncharov's choice of themes and methods of portrayal.

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were severely punished by the disdain and open condemnation of this closed society.

As a rule the mothers or those responsible for the upbringing of a boy or girl would make it their primary duty to shape the child into becoming a worthy member of this elite group. A girl's life and marriage had to be organized in such a way that due respect was accorded to her high station and a picture of dispassionate calm and security was presented to the outside world.

Although Sof'ia Belovodova, born Pakhotina, owed most of her prestige to her father's family (V, 19), it was her mother, naturally also from a good family, who made the most demands on her in order to maintain the family prestige. Not only did she herself rigidly conform to the family code, but her vigilant and unremitting eye and her aloof, haughty manner inspired fear in everyone in the house, her husband, the servants, and her daughter, whom she even sometimes addressed in the formal you (vy) form. The discipline which she inflicted on the girl did not allow for the least leeway either in recreation or in the studies, or as we have seen in her personal life.

There is no textual evidence in Obryv to enable us to find out what was the price that the older members of Sof'ia's circle had to pay for their loyalty to the ancestral code. We know, however, that at one time Sof'ia's aunts had been much admired in society, but that they had remained old maids ("Oni blistali nekogda v svete, i po

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kakim-to krome ikh vsemi zabytym prichinam ostalis' devami" V, 19).

About the mother (whom Sof'ia calls by the French name "maman") we know that she was stern, serious, never joked, hardly every laughed, did not caress much ("maman byla stroga i ser'ezna, nikogda ne shutila, pochti ne smeialas', laskala malo..." V, 99). These few details do not present the picture of a happy woman, whatever the reasons for this may be. When "maman" finds out about Sof'ia's misplaced involvement, it comes to her as a shock. She is the one who takes it upon herself to reprimand Sof'ia, and when Sof'ia faints, she is not the one to console her. This is how Sof'ia describes the event later:

> Kogda ia opomnilas', podle menia sideli obe tetushki, a papa stoial so spirtom. Maman ne bylo. Ia ne videla ee dve nedeli. Potom, kogda uvidelis', ia plakala, prosila proshcheniia. Maman govorila, kak porazila ee èta stsena, kak ona chut' ne zanemogla, kak èto vse zametila kuzina Neliubova i pereskazala Mikhilovym, kak te obvinili ee v nedostatke vnimaniia, branili, zachem prinimali bog znaet kogo. "Vot chemu ty podvergla menia!" - zakliuchila maman. (V, 104)

Following the example of Raiskii, the reader is tempted to discard the mother's attitude as family despotism and intrusiveness. However, if we read the above lines carefully and take them at face value, we can start discerning the mother as an individual, a person who in her turn had to comply to her duty and conform to the image of a mother and an educator. The implacable ancestral code demanded scarifices from each of its members, so it seems.

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One could say that, through Raiskii, the author voiced a point of view which seriously challenged the value of the ancestral ways and stressed their limitations. Nevertheless, in his portrayal of Sof'ia and of her mother, he gave the reader no reason to believe that he himself thought it was time to forget and to abandon tradition, which demanded personal sacrifices and concessions to the family name. On the other hand, there is no doubt that he wanted to draw attention to the more extreme manifestations of this phenomenon and to its negative results, such as the despotic control which the aunts exercized over Sof'ia's private life, or the extent to which absurd gossip or public censure could influence personal freedom.

We can conclude that the portrayal of Sof'ia and her elders achieves more than one purpose. It gives a memorable description of a way of life which was gradually becoming history and at the same time raises questions about the happiness of its adherents. Furthermore, within the novel as a whole these characters act as foils for the depiction of other, major characters whose individual traits and rustic way of life point to a very different system of values.[16]

The main representative of this alternate manner of thinking in Obryv is the Grandmother, Tat'iana Markovna Berezhkova, an aristocrat, a landed lady, and a mother substitute for her two grandnieces. She too is strongly aware of her social status and of the rights as well as the

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[16] Tseitlin (240) had mentioned this already.

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obligations which this brings. Nevertheless, she feels free to be the master of her own life, make her own decisions, and choose her own priorities instead of being enslaved to the laws dictated by her privileged birth and by tradition.

Admittedly she believes more than anyone else in tradition, and in the novel her image is associated with the "Old Truth." One should, however, be careful to avoid assuming that for the Grandmother tradition represents a set of rules to be followed blindly out of fear of social reprimand or through passive imitation. For her tradition is the wisdom of the past, at times a tested old friend on which she feels she can rely, at times an object that demands only pro forma respect, and at times merely an ornament. Whenever she feels that the old ways have become useless or, even worse, harmful, she discards them without regret or hypocrisy. And the Grandmother's sober mind and loving heart never fail to show her when to cast aside those prejudices and formalities which affect the freedom, the general happiness and the dignity of other people.

Among the members of Sof'ia's family, the Grandmother can best be compared to the aunts. All of them are unmarried, all take an active part in the upbringing or surveillance of girls who are related to them by blood, and all are restricted in their interests to their immediate environment, which for the aunts is their house and their restricted social circle and for the Grandmother is the estate and the town nearby (V, 228). But within the limits

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of this similarity Goncharov deliberately contrasts the two groups. The stifling, self-centered and inward directed atmosphere of the Pakhotin house, which in Raiskii's words resembles "a graveyard" (V, 29), contrasts with the active, living existence of the Grandmother, oriented towards the outside, toward other people, nature, the sun. This, for example, is the way the author describes the Grandmother's preferences regarding her home:

> Pered oknami malen'kogo domika pestrel na solntse bol'shoi tsvetnik, iz kotorogo vela dver' vo dvor, a drugaia stekliannaia dver' s bol'shim balkonom, vrode verandy, v dereviannyi zhiloi dom.
> Tat'iana Markovna liubila videt' otkrytoe mesto pered glazami, chtob ne pokhodilo na trushchobu, chtob bylo solnyshko da pakhlo tsvetami.
> S drugoi storony doma, obrashchennoi k dvoram, ei bylo vidno vse, chto delaetsia na bol'shom dvore, v liudskoi, v kukhne, na senovale, v koniushne, v pogrebakh. Vse èto bylo u nei pered glazami, kak na ladoni. (V, 62)

The warm, friendly setting reflects the casual, loving spirit which reigns in this house. More than once the author uses the same details for the Grandmother's home as he had done earlier for Pakhotin's, but gives them a completely different colouring. Thus he depicts the daily morning encounter between the Grandmother and her little grandnieces, Vera and Marfen'ka. Like Sof'ia's mother she mentions their hair and the way they look, and also asks them to keep the curtains drawn. Here, however, it is a mark of true care and affection, not of discipline or reticence:

> Kogda utrom ubirali so stola kofe, v komnatu vvalivalas' zdorovaia baba, s neob'iatnymi, krasnymi shchekami i vechno smeiushchimsia - khot' bei ee - rtom: èto nian'ka vnuchek, Verochki i Marfen'ki. Za

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nei vkhodila let dvenadtsati devchonka, ee pomoshchnitsa. Privodili detei zavtrakat' v komnatu k babushke.

-Nu, ptichki moi, ny chto? - govorila babushka, vsegda zatrudniaias', kotoruiu prezhde potselovat'. - Nu, chto Verochka? vot umnitsa: prichesalas'.

-I ia, baben'ka, i ia! - krichala Marfen'ka.

-Chto èto u Marfen'ki glazki krasny? ne plakala li vo sne? - zabotlivo sprashivals ona u niani. - Ne solnyshko li nazhglo? Zakryty li u tebia zanaveski? Smotri ved', ty razinia! Ia uzho posmotriu. (V, 67)

As an educator, the Grandmother is well intentioned and is traditional and dignified without being haughty and domineering. Her bearing inspires respect in all who surround her. At the same time in minor matters she acts in a free and unconventional way which suits her best. Thus her hair is cut short, and she does not usually keep her bonnet on, all of which goes against the old tradition. She does not display any personal vanity or like to look at herself in the mirror: she casually screens the offending piece of antique furniture.

V kabinete Tat'iany Markovny stoialo starinnoe, tozhe okovannoe bronzoi i ukrashennoe rez'boi, biuro s zerkalom, s urnami, s lirami, s geniiami.

No babushka zavesila zerkalo. "Meshaet pisat', kogda vidish svoiu rozhu naprotiv", - govorila ona. (V, 63)

Critics have often remarked on the Grandmother's consciousness of status.[17] Although it is pointless to deny her sense of class distinction, it is still true that she treats everyone under her control with humanity and fairness. In spite of the sterness which she presents to the world, her serfs and servants lead a healthy and relaxed

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[17] See, for example, Tseitlin 241.

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existence in a manner of their choosing. Neither their love affairs, drinking or smoking evoke more than an occasional reprimand (V, 66-67), and this by the standards of the time was hardly punishment at all. In general people surrounding the Grandmother could feel free. This is perhaps the author's reason for introducing the minor episode of the rope which the Grandmother buys for the women who would otherwise hang their laundry on the trees:

> - Opiat' na derev'ia bel'e veshaiut gnevno zametila ona, obratias' k staroste. - Ia velela verevku protianut'. Skazhi slepoi Agashke: èto ona vse liubit na ivu rubashki veshat'! sokrovishche! Oblomaet vetki!..
> - Verevki takoi dlinnoi net, - sonno otozvalsia starosta, - uzho nado v gorode kupit'...
> - Chto zh ne skazhesh' Vasilise: ona dolozhila by mne. Ia vsiakuiu nedeliu ezzhu: davno by kupila.
> - Ia skazyval: da zabyvaet - ili govorit, ne stoit baryniu trevozhit'.
> Babushka zaviazala ne platke uzelok. Ona liubila govorit', chto bez nee nichego ne sdelaetsia, khotia, naprimer, verevku mog kupit' vsiakii. (V, 70)

The rope with its usual negative associations of tying, whipping and hanging is in the Grandmother's household employed for harmless, domestic purposes.

The attitudes of the Grandmother and the Pakhotiny differ just as much with regard to those who do not belong to the immediate family circle. For the Pakhotiny aunts, family pride is a cause of seclusion, isolation and withdrawal from everyone who is not likely to be considered an equal and share their beliefs. For the Grandmother the reverse is the case: her family status serves as an added incentive to her unlimited desire for social contacts and

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human interaction. Thus:

> Liubila, chtob k nei gubernator izredka zaekhal s vizitom, chtoby priezzhee iz Peterburga vazhnoe ili zamechatel'noe litso nepremenno pobyvalo u nei, i vitse gubernatorsha podoshla, a ne ona k nei, posle obedni v tserkvi pozdorovat'sia, chtob, kogda edet po gorodu, ni odin vstrechnyi ne proekhal i ne proshel, ne poklonias' ei, chtoby kuptsy zasuetilis' i brosili prochikh pokupatelei, kogda ona iavitsia v lavku, chtob nikogda nikto ne skazal o nei durnogo slova, chtoby doma vse ee slushalis', do togo chtob kuchera nikogda ne kurili trubki noch'iu, osobenno na senovale, i chtob Taraska ne napivalsia p'ian, dazhe kogda oni mogli by delat' èto tak, chtob ona ne uznala.
>
> Liubila ona, chtoby vsiakii den' kto-nibud' zavernul k nei, a v imeniny ee vse, nachinaia s arkhireia, gubernatora i do poslednego povytchika v palate, chtoby tri dnia gorod pominal ee roskoshnyi zavtrak, nuzhdy net, chto ni gubernator, ni povytchiki ne pol'zovalis' ee iskrennim raspolozheniem. No esli by ne prishel v ètot den' m-r Sharl', kotorogo ona terpet' ne mogla, ili Polina Karpovna, ona by iskrenno obidelas'.
>
> V ètot den' ona, po vsei veroiatnosti, vtaine zhelala, chtoby zashel na pirog dazhe Markushka. (V, 229)

It may seem that, in a way, the Grandmother is looking for constant recognition both as a tribute to family pride and to her own personal qualities; nevertheless, in her actions she obviously tries to be worthy in every way of the respect and cordiality shown to her. Her charm, sociability and hospitality make it easy for her to be the centre of attention, which is unusual for a woman who is not married, but which as a noblewoman she can consider her due. A certain amount of theatricality is an inevitable accompaniment of high social status. The Grandmother's taste for public appearances and various annual and other celebrations reveals a certain justifiable vanity, but above

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all shows that she is a great master of ceremonies who knows well how to act the role which is expected of her.

There is a moment in Obryv when the Grandmother miscalculates the necessity for acting this social role. This is the proposal scene of Part III between Vikent'eva, the mother of Marfen'ka's future financée, and herself. The importance and solemnity of the moment required special preparations from both women. They both put on their best clothes, and the Grandmother gave orders to prepare the old festive tableware and ordered a festive meal to celebrate the anticipated betrothal. It should not therefore seem surprising that, just as she put on her best antique jewelry, so she puts on her most archaic and ceremonious behaviour and nearly offends her guest. For although she was happy at the idea of the coming marriage, a formal proposal in the traditional manner is what she was conditioned to expect. The Muscovite aura of solemnity and patriarchal despotism obviously came naturally to her and she loses all sense of proportion in her urge for magnificence:

> - Eto takoe vazhnoe delo, Mar'ia Egorovna, - podumavshi, s dostoinstvom skazala Tat'iana Markovna, potupiv glaza v pol, - chto ia vdrug reshit' nichego ne mogu. Nado podumat' i pogovorit' tozhe s Marfen'koi. Khotia devochki moi iz povinoveniia moego ne vykhodiat, no vse i prinuzhdat' ikh ne mogu...
> - Marfa Vasil'evna soglasna: ona liubit Nikolen'ku...
> Maria Egorovna chut' ne pogubila delo svoego syna.
> - A pochem on èto znaet? - vdrug, vspykhnuv, skazala Tat'iana Markovna. - Kto emu skazal?
> - Kazhetsia, on ob'iasnilsia s Marfoi Vasil'evnoi...- probormotala skonfuzhennaia barynia.

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- Za to, chto Marfen'ka otvechala na ego ob'iasnenie, ona sidit teper' vzaperti v svoei komnate v odnoi iubke, bez bashmakov! - solgala babushka dlia pushchei vazhnosti. - A chtob vash syn ne smushchal bednuiu devushku, ia ne velela prinimat' ego v dom! - opiat! solgala ona dlia okonchatel'noi vazhnosti i s dostoinstvom pogliadela na gost'iu, otkinuvshis' k spinke divana.

Ta tozhe vspyknula.

- Esli b ia predvidela, - skazala ona gluboko obizhennym golosom, - chto on vputaet menia v nepriiatnoe delo, ia by otvechala emu vchera inache. No on tak uveril menia, da i ia sama do ètoi minuty byla uverena - v vashem dobrom raspolozhenii k nemu i ko mne! Izvinite, Tat'iana Markovna, i pospeshite osvobodit' iz zakliucheniia Marfu Vasil'evnu... Vinovat vo vsem moi: on i dolzhen byt' nakazan... A teper' proshchaite, i opiat' proshu izvinit' menia... Prikazhite cheloveku podavat' koliasku!...

Ona dazhe potianulas' k zvonku. (VI, 137)[18]

The main problem in this enthusiasm for the old ways was that the Grandmother and her guest were on two quite different wave lengths. At this important moment in their lives they both emphasize the values of their own upbringing, and whereas the Grandmother acts with an exaggerated traditionalism, Vikent'eva is modern and informal. This understandably nearly brings about a conflict, as the Grandmother undoubtedly perceives. Hence, after enjoying this brief interlude of old-fashioned traditionalism, she quickly switches into the other extreme and stuns the bewildered visitor with her friendliness, charm and a disarming frankness that restores the harmony

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[18] Compare C. Gordon, "Role and value development across the life-cycle" in John A. Jackson, ed., Role (Cambridge 1972) 66-67, who states that "once roles are differentiated, elements of behaviour, sentiments and motives tend to be assigned to the existing roles...Once stabilized, the role structure tends to persist, regardless of changes in the actors."

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and propriety which had so nearly been lost:

> U Tat'iany Markovny propala vsia vazhnost'. Morshchiny razgladilis', i radost' zasiiala v glazakh. Ona sborosila na divan shal' i chepchik.
> - Mochi net - zharko! Izvinite, dushechka, skin'te mantil'iu -- vot tak, i shliapku tozhe. Vidite, kakaia zhara! Nu... my ikh nakazhem vmeste, Mar'ia Egorovna: zhenim - u menia budet eshche vnuk, a u vas doch'. Obnimite menia, dushen'ka! Ved' ia tol'ko staryi obychai khotela podderzhat'. Da, vidno, ne vezde prigozhi oni, èti starye obychai! (VI, 138-39)

More than once in Obryv the Grandmother is referred to as "mother" and is frequently labelled by the critics as a mother figure. It is important to note, however, that she does not try to replace the real mother of her wards. On the contrary, the portraits of the true parents of her foster children occupy an important place in her house and she makes repeated references to the parents themselves, especially to the mothers. Moreover, her age, experience and cast of mind put her in a very different position from a real mother.

It is, nevertheless, worth investigating under what circumstances the Grandmother's foster children, Raiskii and Vera, start referring to her by that name. The occasion is Vera's fall, a tragedy which Raiskii is about to announce to the Grandmother:

> 'I babushku zhal'! Kakoe uzhasnoe, neozhidannoe gore narushit mir ee dushi! Chto, esli ona vdrug svalitsia! - prikhodilo emu v golovu, - von ona - sama ne svoia, nichego eshche ne znaia! U nego podstupili slezy k glazam ot ètoi mysli.
> A na nem eshche lezhit obiazannost' vonzit' glubzhe nozh v serdtse ètoi - svoei materi! (VI, 301)

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By calling her thus, he not only reveals his own deep feeling for her, his gratitude for the affection she has given, but he also foreshadows her reaction to the news, which is neither anger nor indignation, but pain. Vera starts calling her "mother" later, when, after the Grandmother's initial despair, she discovers in her only immense compassion, understanding, and love:

> Babushka molcha slushala rydaniia i platkom otirala ee slezy, ne meshaia plakat' i tol'ko prizhimaia ee golovu k svoei grudi i osypaia potseluiami.
> - Ne laskaite, babushka... bros'te menia... ne stoiu ia... otdaite vashu liubov' i laski sestre...
> Babushka v otvet krepche prizhala ee k grudi.
> - Sestre ne nuzhny bol'she moi laski, a mne nuzhna tvoia liubov' - ne pokidai menia, Vera, ne chuzhdaisia menia bol'she, ia sirota! - skazala ona i sama zaplakala.
> Vera szhala ee vsei svoei siloi.
> - Mat' moia, prostite menia... - sheptala ona. (VI, 333)

For Goncharov "mother", in its deepest sense, is not associated either with the education of the children or with housekeeping, or even with being a natural parent. For him a true mother is the one who is capable of selfless and unshakeable love. She is the one who is capable of sacrifice and who identifies herself with the child in suffering as well as in happiness. It is therefore only through the deeper levels of human experience that such a relationship can be tested.

From our discussion so far one might conclude that Goncharov does not portray his younger women, his heroines, as mothers. Indeed, of the characters mentioned so far,

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Vikent'eva, who is young, modern and open minded, has only an episodic role. She represents a new, progressive type of mother, who treats her son as her equal and who still maintains control over him without being either authoritative or protective (VI, 132-134).

Among the major characters Ol'ga in Oblomov at a certain point gets married and has children (her daughter is also named Ol'ga),[19] but the reader is never allowed to see them together. Moreover, giving birth was connected with difficulties for Ol'ga's health, and caring for the child does not seem either her major joy or her usual preoccupation.[20] Clearly, Ol'ga is not one of those traditional, instinctive mothers for whom motherhood has replaced all previous concerns and desires. At the same time, it is Ol'ga who agrees to take upon herself the custody of Oblomov's son Andriusha. Here she reveals her continued interest in Oblomov, as well as her determination and her sense of duty. For if at one time Ol'ga had wanted to save Oblomov from his indolence, now she has a second chance in trying to save his son from the limitations of the milieu into which he was born.

The presence or the image of one's mother, whether or not she is living, are of lasting significance to her children. Whatever its nature, it inevitably continues to have an influence on the character and the mentality of the

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[19] IV, 468.

[20] At this point one feels tempted to contrast Ol'ga with Natasha in Voina i mir and her pride in all the "naturalistic aspects" of motherhood.

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child throughout its life, creating a lasting dependency. Thus when Goncharov wishes to portray a heroine with a willful and determined character, he removes the mother and replaces her with a mother substitute who is quite incapable of motherly feelings.

In the case of Ol'ga, whose life is governed more by mind than by feeling and who is meant to typify a strong woman, the relationship with her proper and stylish aunt never gets beyond the limits of elementary politeness:

> Ol'ga slushalas' nastol'ko, naskol'ko tetka vyrazhala zhelanie ili vyskazyvala sovet, otniud' ne bolee, - a ona vsegda vyskazyvala ego s umerennost'iu do sukhosti, naskol'ko dopuskali prava tetki, nikogda bolee.
>
> Otnosheniia èti byli tak bestsvetny, chto nel'zia bylo nikak reshit', est' li v kharaktere tetki kakie-nibud' pritiazaniia na poslushanie Ol'gi, na ee osobennuiu nezhnost', ili est' li v kharaktere Ol'gi poslushanie k tetke i osobennaia k nei nezhnost'.
>
> Zato s pervogo raza, vidia ikh vmeste, mozhno bylo reshit, chto oni - tetka i plemiannitsa, a ne mat' i doch'. (IV, 229)

It seems that in her daily routine Ol'ga is satisfied with this sterile but non-oppressive arrangement, or perhaps she is only resigned to it. All the same, in connection with more personal and more important matters, such as her love for and relationship with Oblomov, she misses the presence of her dead mother and gives vent to her inner loneliness. This is what she answers to Oblomov when he expresses concern that the news about their relationship may spread:

> - Chto skazhut, kogda uznaiut, kogda raznesetsia...
>
> - Kto zh skazhet? U menia net materi: ona odna mogla by sprosit' menia, zachem ia vizhus' s toboi,

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> i pered nei odnoi ia zaplakala by v otvet i skazala by, chto ia durnogo nichego ne delaiu i ty tozhe. Ona by poverila. Kto zhe drugoi? - sprosila ona.
> - Tetka, - skazal Oblomov.
> - Tetka?
> Ol'ga pechal'no i otritsatel'no pokachala golovoi.
> - Ona nikogda ne sprosit. Esli b ia ushla sovsem, ona by ne poshla iskat' i sprashivat' menaia, a ia ne prishla by bol'she skazat' ei, gde byla i chto delala. Kto zh eshche? (IV, 290)

Accordingly, in a painful moment when she decides to make a final decision and break away from Oblomov for good, it is to the memory of the dead mother that she turns in search of support and guidance which she cannot find elsewhere:

> - Poslushai, - skazala ona, - ia seichas dolgo smotrela na portret moei materi i, kazhetsia, zaniala v ee glazakh soveta i sily. Esli ty teper', kak chestnyi chelovek... Pomni Il'ia, my ne deti i ne shutim: delo idet o tseloi zhizni! Sprosi zhe strogo u svoei sovesti i skazhi - Budesh' li ty dlia menia tem, chto mne nuzhno? (IV, 380)

There is an instance in Obryv where Goncharov goes so far as to suggest that a mother's power and the loving watch that she keeps can continue to protect her child even after death. Thus it is to Vera's mother that the Grandmother feels responsible, and it is from her that she expects a punishment for not preventing Vera's dire mistake:

> - Babushka! razve mozhno proshchat' svoiu mat'? Ty sviataia zhenshchina! Net drugoi takoi materi... Esli b ia tebia znala... vyshla li by ia iz tvoei voli?
> - Eto moi drugoi strashnyi grekh! perebila ee Tat'iana Markovna, - ia molchala i ne otvela tebia... ot obryva! Mat' tvoia iz groba dostaet menia za èto; ia chuvstvuiu - ona vse snitsia mne... Ona teper' tut mezhdu nas... Prosti menia i ty pokoinitsa! - govorila starukha, diko oziraias' vokrug i prostiraia ruku k nebu. U Very probezhala drozh po telu. - Prosti i ty Vera, - prostite obe!..

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Budem molit'sia! (VI, 344)

Here the image of the deceased mother appears almost as a hallucination and suggests the possibility of an interpretation that goes beyond the sober analysis of the Grandmother's state of mind, her psychology and the absolute acceptance of the laws of nature.

Other more straightforward links between mother and child are, for example, the character traits Andrei Shtol'ts in Oblomov owes to the influence of his gentle mother, or in Obryv Raiskii's imaginative and artistic nature which was believed to come from his mother's side. In all these cases mothers are connected with love, beauty, intuition, elements which give an added dimension to their children's lives.

It seems that Goncharov is very conscious of the mother child relationship. Aside from the major themes and motifs which he develops in connection with this subject, his works abound in brief but sharply delineated sketches that vividly bring out one or another aspect of this family duo. So in Fregat Pallada one can note exotic woman intricately pinching her child's back (II, 307), or in Schastlivaia oshibka one reads about a mother and her young, marriageable daughter, the two of them making their way through a party-crowd "like a big ship pulling a little boat behind" (VII, 454). Whether touching or humorous, these sketches inevitably project a fmaily unity for which the author obviously had a sharp eye.

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In his early short essay "Khorosho ili durno zhit' na svete"[21] Goncharov associates the Practical and the Real with men and the Ideal with women. In different forms one can find echoes of this concept in most of his later works as well. In accordance with this it seems that he connects the perfect, complete and harmonious development of a child with two parents acting cooperatively, the woman being responsible for the affective and esthetic aspects of child rearing and the father for the practical side.

In fact, Goncharov gives an example of this type of upbringing in Andrei Shtol'ts. Here the pervasive influence of the gentle and artistic mother is moderated and balanced by the equally insistent influence of the father, a German burgher. This man is capable of giving a sense of the practical to his son and serves as a living example of action and determination. In this case, however, the goals of the two parents are incompatible, which may in part explain the imperfections of Shtol'ts's own character. In none of his works does Goncharov portray a harmonious, fully balanced family. He contents himself with a mild hint at how it can, or should, be achieved.

We conclude that, according to Goncharov, nothing can replace a mother's love. Genuine love bestowed on a child in his early years remains in his memory like a dream of a lost paradise which can be the source of consolation and support throughout his whole life. Nevertheless, as Goncharov

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[21] "Khorosho ili durno zhit' na svete," in Tseitlin 447.

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explicitly states and as his narrative makes clear, an excess of protectiveness, care and phantasy can, and probably will, affect the child's personality adversely and make it difficult for him to cope properly with the reality of adulthood. The impressions of childhood do not, perhaps, change a person's basic individuality, but they will always remain an indestructable, almost palpable factor which a grownup will be unable to ignore.

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CHAPTER FOUR

WOMEN AND WOMAN THEMES IN THE LATER SHORT PROSE

Although the period when Goncharov again began to write short works of fiction can be referred to as coming after the publication of his third and last novel, Obryv, in 1869, this period did not start immediately thereafter. The state of depression and bitterness into which he fell mainly as the result of the critics' unfavourable and hostile reception of this novel prevented him from writing for several years.[1] For a while he felt that he would never be able to write again at all:

> Konechno, ia nichego ne delaiu, t.e. ne pishu, i chuvstvuiu, chto nikogda bolee pisat' ne budu. Menia ubili moral'no i ubili vsiakuiu zhivuiu sposobnost' vo mne.[2]

Goncharov did continue writing, though, but for several years only wrote articles of literary or art criticism, or analyses and afterwords to his novels. In addition, he contributed to two Petersburg newspapers book reviews, feuilletons and minor sketches, all of them unsigned.

His first attempt at another work of fiction did not

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[1] Rybasov (323) says that as a result of the blows inflicted by the critics of Obryv the years 1869-1870 were among the most difficult in Goncharov's personal life. On the other hand (ibid., 321) the reading public was quite enthusiastic. See also Utevskii 216-17: the periodical Vestnik Evropy, where Obryv was serialized, grew from a circulation of 3700 in 1868 to 5700 by May, 1869.

[2] From an unpublished letter to S.A. Nikitenko of 1870 (see Utevskii 226).

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come until 1873, when he was asked to contribute to the literary almanac Skladchina. But the story which he then began, Poezdka po Volge, remained unfinished and was not published until long after the author's death. Finally, in 1877, Goncharov again began writing fiction and in the remaining years of his life, he published several short works, some of which, at least on their artistic level, met with the approval of critics. In addition, there were a few posthumously published works. Besides Poezdka po Volge, which was written in 1873-74 and first published in 1940, the works which belong to this period include Literaturnyi vecher, published in 1880, Slugi starogo veka, published in 1888, Vospominaniia: V universitete and Na rodine, published in 1887 and 1888, and Mai mesiats v Peterburge, Ukha and Prevratnost' sud'by, all published posthumously in 1892, 1923 and 1892 respectively.

As one might expect, the later works of this well known, but embittered and sick author, do not display the same concerns, attitudes and themes as the early prose works, written some three decades earlier, or even as his most recent novels. With all their differences in style and subject matter, these late works share certain common features that deserve attention.

One common feature is that none of the later literary works are completely fictional. All of them have, or are purported to have, at least a minor biographical link with the author. Hence they are written as the author's

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reminiscences, or are stories whose plot is believed to be an anecdote told to the author, or are sketches that describe the inhabitants of the house in which the author himself is believed to have lived. The device of using a biographical element serves to lend credibility to the content of the work and allows the author to describe the events of the past while generally avoiding direct reference to contemporary events. To a certain extent it also helps him spare the creations of his own imagination from the criticism of the public and particularly of the press, a painful experience which in the past caused him many frustrations and disillusons.[3]

But whatever the factual background attributed to all these late works, in the selection of the subject matter and its artistic rendition it is the author himself who makes the choice.[4] In this regard it is interesting to note that none of Goncharov's later works have an active hero or heroine, but at most consist of episodes built around a central character. Sometimes even this unifying element is lacking, and the work is held together only by an organizing theme or motif. The central figure, when there is one, is never a woman. Furthermore, Goncharov's later fiction fails

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[3] In a letter written in 1878 (quoted in Alekseev 232), Goncharov complained that most critics did not have a proper understanding of the heroes of his novels. On the other hand, in reference to the autobiographical Fregat Pallada, he claimed that it was the only book which, "like a rose without thorns", had been for him only a source of joy and had never caused him any disappointment.

[4] Goncharov had always stressed the importance of the author's artistic rendition ("khudozhestvennaia obrabotka"). See, for example, Alekseev 294.

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to show the same interest, respect, sympathy and admiration for women as his earlier works or his novels. Although some women characters are shown in a very favourable light, others are treated with sarcastic humour, utter indifference, or undisguised contempt. The results which the feminist inspired social evolution had on the lives of women are shown only in a superficial and distorted way. In their new and somewhat improved position women have only seemed to grasp at the new possibilities of independence and equality. None of the true goals of the feminists, such as serious work or real education, interest them. The author's sympathy, reserved for people in a weak position, is now no longer bestowed upon women, but in some of these later works actually goes to an underpriviledged or unfortunate man, with the woman acting either as an aggressor or as a sympathetic friend. These works appear to counterbalance those earlier works where women invariably inspired the author to draw attention to their rights. Another factor which held an important place in the previous works and is conspicuously absent in all but one of the later writings is the element of feeling. Love or any other deep feeling between female and male is missing in most of the later works and is at best replaced by friendship or kindness and at worst by indifference, hypocrisy and lust.

Those few female characters who most attract the author's sympathy, approval and interest are very different from the beautiful strong and intelligent woman types of his

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earlier works: they are simple, impulsive people, often humble and naive, and above all undemanding and kind. This seems to indicate the qualities which at this point in his life Goncharov himself would have cherished most in women, since his general distrust and resentment against humanity, as one can see from a letter written in 1868, has not spared the other sex:

> ... ia bol'noi, zagnannyi, zatravlennyi, neponiatyi nikem i neshchadno oskorbliaemyi samymi blizkimi mne liud'mi, dazhe zhenshchinami, vsego bolee imi, komu ia posviatil tak mnogo zhizni i pera.[5]

Even if we admit that as an author Goncharov does justice to the female characters which he chooses to portray in his later works, we must also realize that his earlier enthusiasm and support for the cause of women as members of a socially distinct group had at this late stage evaporated.

This change in the author's attitude is already apparent in the first work written during this late period, Poezdka po Volge. Although as an unfinished sketch it defies generalizations, one can nevertheless see that most of the young women of the middle class or the gentry are represented here as being trivial and mercenary and that their description makes them appear both shallow and cheap. It is worth noting that in a brief, unfinished feuilleton, Rozhdestvenskaia elka, written at about the same time in 1875, Goncharov remarks on the mercenary attitude which

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[5] Utevskii 190.

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people, especially of the female sex, have for holidays and gifts.[6] In Poezdka po Volge, however, there is a hint that not all women resemble those whom the hero succeeds in befriending. The story includes in passing the brief description of a group of dignified and unapproachable ladies.

But in this sketch, a treatment which is more friendly in tone and also more detailed is reserved not for a young woman, but a very old one, a peasant whose confused mind makes her oblivious to time, place or people's identity. The sketchy portrait of the old woman has drawn favourable attention from some critics, especially since it is one of the few peasant types in the whole body of Goncharov's works.[7] Nevertheless, whatever the artistic qualties of this portrayal, neither the old woman nor the other women in the sketch recall Goncharov's strong-minded and willful female characters of the earlier stories or the novels.

In the next work, Literaturnyi vecher,[8] which was the first work of this late period to be published during the author's lifetime, woman themes appear on two separate levels. On one level the plot of the new novel, as retold by the narrator, portrays in a rather mocking way the love, jealousy, despair and forgiveness of an aristocratic lady for an artistocratic gentleman. The plot of the novel also shows social injustice and gossip being used as a weapon

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[6] See 459-53, especially 460-61.
[7] See Tseitlin 300 and Setchkarev 257.
[8] Literatyrnyi vecher was inspired by the literary readings which the author was obliged to attend. See Tseitlin 294.

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against a virtuous, kind and innocent young girl in an intrigue which nevertheless ends happily for her. On this level one can see the author's critical attitude to the intrigues and weaknesses of society women, an attitude which can also be found in Goncharov's earliest works. But this criticism is softened by the mild and humorous manner in which the events are narrated and by the device of reportage that makes the real author of Literaturnyi vecher seem only a dispassionate and amused observer.

On a second level woman themes also appear in the society where the reading takes place. Here the author incorporates ideas referring to emancipation and shows that, in spite of some attempts at equality, little had changed for women over the years. Since this is a predominantly male circle, the ladies are invided to attend primarily as observers, and indeed most of them have little to contribute to the proceedings other than their elegant dresses and stylish manners. They are only an ornament to the occasion, and do not give the impression of being any more progressive, liberated or intelllctual than their tradition-bound ancestors.

Among the women who are portrayed in some detail are the princess Tetskaia and her stately daughter. In appearance this couple recall the distant past, the mother nervously displaying the good looks and good upbringing of her marriageable daughter and the daughter putting on an a air of conventional innocence at the mere mention of love

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(secretly, though, she enjoys reading Zola VII, 126-27).[9] Since they come from high society, they are considered a social asset, but since they both have a closed mind and little individuality, their personal value is negligeable.

Another couple, countess Siniavskaia and her daughter, are on the other hand portrayed as sensitive and intelligent. They behave with an informal grace, display a genuine interest in the reading, and are obviously both capable of sincere feelings and true enjoyment (VII, 127,130). Nevertheless, while the young daughter's emotions reveal themselves clearly, the mother's thoughts and feelings are kept under control and her enigmatic smile gives her the name of "Sphinx" (VII, 106). Only subtle changes of facial expression indicate that she is capable of fine feeling and educated taste. In fact, she reacts to the reading in the same way as an old knowledgeable male guest (VII, 127). And yet she refuses to express her opinions or praise the author openly, as though the expression of sincere feelings would be a breach of good behaviour (VII, 130).

Countess Siniavskaia and the author of the novel, at whose personal invitation she had been asked to attend the literary evening, show signs of a genuine rapport which is otherwise almost completely lacking in this indifferent and superficial group of listeners. Their silent eye contact

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[9] As Renato Poggioli says in his The Phoenix and the Spider (Cambridge 1957), Russian realism always covered sex with a veil of chastity. Accordingly, Zola never found favour with the Russian realists (Poggioli 8-9).

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(VII, 127) establishes a link of understanding that goes beyond words. The countess and the author show true feeling for each other that borders on love, a sentiment that is not shown by most of the characters in Goncharov's other late works. This feeling between a woman, who is obviously married, and another man is understated and controlled, and contrasts favourably with the effusive expressions of love, jealousy and exaggerated virtue described in the 'novel' by the fictional author himself. The colourful and dramatic product of the novelist's imagination has little connection with the fine feeling of admiration and trust which the enigmatic and silent countess evokes in him, and it seems that the real author of Literaturnyi vecher looks with benevolence on this budding relationship that is based on non-conventional ties.

Other steps in the direction of progress are shown in connection with the young widow Lilina and her attempts at equality. She is neither a conformist nor an intellectual, but is an enthusiast who treats life with an indiscriminate and childish joy. In fact the epithet connected with her is "childish" (detskii) (VII, 104), and her pleasure at the novel-reading, which she praises with meaningless compliments, is compared to the joy of a small girl who has been given a new doll ("kak devochka, kotoroi podarili novuiu kuklu" VII, 134).

Not surprisingly, it is this enthusiastic woman who of all the ladies most departs from the traditional ways and

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tries to behave progressively. For example, she is the only lady who stays for the supper which follows the novel reading. As a widow she can afford a certain social freedom, but in an exclusively male company she remains an outsider and an observer. Indeed, when she tries to join in the literary conversation and says that she, as well as all the other ladies she knows, has real Gogol', her comment is ignored as irrelevant:

> - Ia i vse pochti moi znakomye damy chitali i znaem Gogolia! skazala vdrug Lilina.
> - Kriakov mutno vzglianul na nee.
> - Vy? - vozrazil on, - ne mozhet byt'!
> - Otchego?
> - Esli b vy chitali Gogolia i drugikh narodnykh pisatelei - vashi glaza smotreli by inache i ne bylo by u vas ètoi blazhennoi ulybki.
> - Ona skonfuzilas' i smotrela v nedoumenii vokrug.
> - Qu-est ce qu'il dit? - sprosila ona soseda. (VII, 171)

It is clear that Lilina's acquaintance with Gogol', the superficiality of which cannot escape her male companions, makes her neither more expert nor more profound. Another passage shows that it was common for men to suppose that women were avid readers of novels because they found in them a source of entertainment and excitement that was unavailable to them in real life:

> On schital ètо zhenskim ili, kak on vyrazhalsia, bab'im delom i nakhmurias' smotrel, kak u ego sestry, staroi devushki, tselyi ugol, tochno drov, navaleno bylo russkikh i frantsuzskikh romanov. (VII, 125)

Even if, as seems probable, Lilina read novels in order to follow the progressive and fashionable trend which advocated

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intellectual equality for women, she was in fact incapable of educating her taste and achieving erudition.

In another way, however, Lilina is capable of matching or even surpassing her male companions. When the literary evening and the supper is over, all the men decide to send a valuable, signed souvenir to one of the participants, a well known actor, who contributed most to the success of the evening. Without joining the men, Lilina also takes determined action and sends a generous gift of her own to the actor's wife and attaches a note written in accordance with the standards of progressive feminine thought:

> "Istinnomu vinovniku vechera 7-go maia - blagodarnye sobesedniki", - skazano bylo v zapiske, vlozhennoi v kubok.
> Tam zhe okazalsia futliar s brasletom, ukrashennyi bol'shim izumrudom s bril'iantami vokrug.
> "S odnoi zhenskoi ruki na druguiu, dostoineishuiu, ruku suprugi znamenitogo artista - ot zhenshchiny", - napisano bylo melkim zhenskim pocherkom na bumazhke. (VII, 192)[10]

Lilina is not successful in her role as an intellectual, and she is clearly not destined to be an emancipated woman. Nonetheless, her femininity, kindness, spontaneity and good humour make her a human being whose company is welcome (VII, 105) and gives her license to side with the feminists in support of another woman and thus make a modest contribution to the women's cause. Lilina here follows the trend of the English feminists, who believed that the improvement of the lot of women was the mission of

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[10] Ibid., 192. See also p. 184: Lilina accepts a toast on behalf of all women.

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women themselves.[11]

But despite the subtle interweaving of progressive feminist ideas into the texture of Literaturnyi vecher and the mild manifestations of a freedom of feeling and a readiness of women to support each other, the work as a whole shows that little has changed over the years. As a group the ladies still keep separate from the men. The rules of society still limit a woman's personal freedom and make ther vulnerable to public opinion and intrigue. Women of society are on the whole predictable (VII, 184) and shallow. In the eyes of men women, just as in the past, fall into two extreme categories. For they are either an indispensable source of pleasure and entertainment (along with the men's club and cards)[12] or they represent an equally indispensable poetic ideal:

> -Da, zhenshchiny - vse! - pribavil i professor. - Oni inogda iavnyi, inogda skrytyi motiv vsiakogo chelovecheskogo dela; ikh prisutstvie, veianie, tak skazat', zhenskoi atmosfery, daet tsvet i plod zhizni. My, muzhchiny, tol'ko orudie, rabochaia sila, na nas lezhit vsiakaia chernaia rabota... slovom my materiia, a zhenshchiny - dukh... (VII, 184)

In this work neither women nor men reflect the progress aimed at by the feminists of the mid-nineteenth century, and as a human being a woman here is not the equal of a man.

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[11] See Sites 64. The idea of the women of different countries banding together can be found in a humourous form in Fregat Pallada, where the author, to the delight of his hostess, a traditional Portuguese lady, tells her that he will send the bouquet of her flowers as her gift to Russian women (but later he throws the flowers away). See II, 105-106.

[12] VII, 184.

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Furthermore, Literaturnyi vecher does not appear to contain any hidden message from the author calling for change. And he appears resigned to a state of affairs which it was difficult, if not impossible, to change radically.

Individual rather than public issues are dealt with in Goncharov's next work, Sluqi starogo veka. Although the central characters of the four sketches are men, each sketch has a woman theme developed in connection with the central male character or introduced as a digression. The four sketches thus illustrate four different types of relationship between a man, whether married or single, and a woman, and refer to situations which either complement the characterization of the servants or contribute to the reader's understanding of the narrator himself.

The first servant, Valentin, is over fifty years old and the pattern of his behaviour towards women is that of free love. He is a bachelor and a womanizer, an unrestrained Don Juan. Women visit him freely during his master's absence, but that does not satisfy him. All women, including the ladies who visit his master, interest Valentin, and if they are young and beautiful they put him into a state of narcissistic elation (VII, 329-30). In addition, Valentin is attracted to the working girls of the neighbourhood, but with those girls he has no luck. They either laugh at him, complain, fight him off, or menace him. Yet, he is never put off by all this. He is a born bachelor, a seducer, for whom women are a need, an addiction for which he is willing to

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suffer humiliation, reprimand or punishment (Valentin's addiction costs him his job in the narrator's house).

In the second sketch the woman theme revolves not around the central character, Anton, but around the narrator himself. A digression describes a dialogue between the narrator and a lady, who reproaches him for not being married and hence for allowing his house to be robbed by "wolves" or thieves. But whereas the lady implies that he is not married because he values the freedom of his bachelor existence too highly, the narrator insists that, had he been married, he could have had other, more ferocious wolves attacking his household:

> - Vot ne zhenilis' - i nakazany! Vot vam prelesti kholostoi zhizni! "Svoboda, nezavisimost'" - govorila mne potom odna priiatel'nitsa, Anna Petrovna, strastnaia okhotnitsa ustraivat' svad'by. - Byla by shena, volki-to i ne zabralis' by...Zhenites'-ka - eshche vremia ne ushlo! ia by vam slavnuiu nevestu sosvatala!
> - Esli b zhenilsia, mozhet byt', zabralis' by drugie volki, zlee ètikh! - melankholicheski otvetil ia.
> -Nu-u! - protiazhno i nereshitel'no protestovala ona zagadochnym tonom, gliadia ne na menia, a kuda-to v prostranstvo, s zagadochnoi ulybkoi i s zagadochnym zhe vzgliadom.
> ... Ia pozvolil sebe ugadyvat' v ètom ee diplomaticheskom vzgliade zataennyi otvet: "Da, konechno, èto byvaet (to est' "volki", narushiteli supruzheskogo spokoistviia), mozhet sluchit'sia i s vami - da chto zhe mne do ètogo za delo, kogda vy uzh zhenites'!.." (VII, 344)

The reader in this way gets a picture of another type of bachelor, one who is not a Don Juan, but who is a cautious, sensitive man who prefers to live a lonely, abandoned existence rather than take the risk of an unhappy

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marriage by becoming the husband of an unfaithful wife. The portrait in this digression transparently refers to Goncharov himself, who chose to remain a bachelor all his life.

As the title suggests, the third sketch, Stepan s sem'ei, depicts a married servant who has a wife and a son. Stepan and his wife Matrena form a stable family unit, but the common life of these two basically good people is a picture of misery and discord. Matrena is loud, rude and quarrelsome, while Stepan silently ignores his wife's insults and drinks away every penny he can lay his hands on, thus contributing further to their quarrels.

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As the author portrays it, the incorrigible vices of one member of the family affect the other members as well, and before long not only Stepan, but also Matrena and even their seventeen year old son all begin drinking. But although this joint addiction produces a temporary domestic harmony, when wine gives Stepan the necessary courage, he feels the need to reassert his lost manliness and reestablish his lost control over the members of his family:

> - I ia vyp'iu, i mne dai! - govoril sovsem osovevshii Stepan. Ona provorno otstavila vino v storonu.
> - Budet s tebia, ne dam: smotri, kak nagruzilsia, na nedeliu!..
> - Nalivai, raba! Ty raba moia! Chto skazano v pisanii: Prilepis' k muzhu, povinuisia". Nalivai zhe, a to ia vot tebia...
> On vstal i s podniatoi taburetkoi, shataias', dvigalsia k nei, mimokhodom sshib svechku so stola na pol. Mal'chishka zarevel: "Ai, tiat'ka, ne trogai mamku!"
> Ia vse èto videl, stoia v dveriakh, i pospeshil prekatit' bezobraznuiu stsenu.

Ia uvidel, chto vse troe byli p'iany. (VII, 357)

The author's description of this unsightly and drunken family quarrel is particuarly remarkable in that he usually avoids naturalistic scenes that might demean the dignity of a human being. Nevertheless he does not appear to blame either the husband, Stepan, or the wife, Matrena, for their disreputable behaviour and for ruining their own and each other's life. At the conclusion of the sketch he describes Matrena as giving an affectionate account of her husband's peaceful and Christian death and reporting his last words in which he blamed those who had invented vodka (VII, 357). In this way the affective ties between the two characters, Stepan and his wife, are preserved. The element of guilt is diminished and the pair emerge as a stable couple who are the unfortunate victims of forces beyond their control.

For the servant in the fourth and final sketch, marriage implies above all a business partnership. Matvei is a complicated human being whose one obsession in life is to make and save enough money to buy his personal freedom from his master. In conformity with this, he not only works as a servant, and lends out money for profit as a usurer but also insures that any woman in his life must involve profit, and that any marriage must be a marriage of convenience. Thus when he marries an older woman who has money, the two use their combined capital and their united energies to open a well organized and profitable business. And although Matvei

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has used marriage as a jumping off point to achieve higher ambitions and better profits, the same can be said of the woman who marries him. For this couple a marriage is primarily a business contract.

The situations presented in each of the sections of Slugi starogo veka illustrate in this way the different attitudes of men to women and to the roles that women play in their lives, particularly in the case of those men who have to earn a living for themselves.

The female characters and themes in Vospominaniia: na rodine[13] are doubly interesting both for their biographical overtones and for the presentation of female character types who do not appear elsewhere in Goncharov's work. We should note, however, that the biographical element has undergone a process of revision and remodelling to suit the artistic purposes of the work as a whole. As the author puts it, he describes things not so much as they were, but rather as they might have been;

> ...naprasno bylo by otyskivat' v moikh litsakh i sobytiiakh to ili drugoe proisshestvie, to ili drugoe litso, k chemu chitateli byvaiut naklonny voobshche i pri ètom redko popadaiut na pravdu. Vsegda bol'she oshibaiutsia.
>
> Probegaia taper' èti moi melkie provintsial'nye nabroski starogo vremeni, ia mogu vyrazit'sia tak, chto vse opisyvaemoe v nikh ne stol'ko bylo, skol'ko byvalo. Drugimi slovami, ia zhelal by, chtoby v nikh iskali ne goloi pravdy, a pravdopodobiia, i ia budu dovolen, esli takovoe naidetsia. (VII, 225)

For reasons of convenience it is better to group all

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[13] There are no female characters and no themes connected with women in Vospominaniia: v universitete.

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the female characters into three main categories: those of the narrator's family, those of the governor's family, and the two poor gentry girls, who act as retainers in the governor's house. In addition, the first chapter of Na rodine contains a description of the narrator's traveling companions during his four day trip home. Among these companions is a woman (baryn'ka) whose discomfort and worry during the trip are described with a humorous detachment and a moderate use of skaz in the rendering of her speech. The narrator responds to her with a smile or with hidden laughter (VII, 228), an attitude which sets the tone for most of the account of his stay at home,[14] na rodine, where youthful playfulness is combined with the detachment of an observer.

In his description of the family milieu, the narrator mentions the hospitable reception given to him by all the members of the family circle. Of the whole group only the narrator's mother and his godfather receive detailed treatment. The passage on the mother has attracted the attention of scholars for the light it allegedly sheds on the author's own background, since it is generally agreed that his mother had a big influence on Goncharov's life and acted as an inspiration for several of his woman characters. In this story the mother is portrayed as an excellent and

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[14] Women are used in a similar way in Fregat Pallada where the author briefly refers to his dialogues with two women, one of whom expresses an irrational fear and the other an irrational pity. Besides amusing him, their reactions serve to bring out the unusual and even dangerous nature of his trip. II, 12-13.

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well organized housekeeper who is in control of a big household (VII, 234). As a mother she is just, fair and vigilant, but is also stern, demanding and implacable (VII, 235). In the structure of Na rodine, however, it is important to treat her in conjunction with the godfather, whose presence in the household made him seem like a real father (VII, 234). He was a kind, gentle and indulgent man and was prone to spoil the children, so that the traditional concept of a kind and forgiving mother as opposed to a stern and redoubtable father is put in reverse, with the mother acting as the disciplinarian and the father presenting an over-indulgent and protective image. This reversal of the traditional order of things eliminates the clearly distinguishable borderlines between typically male and typically female characters. In matters of strength of character, kindness, gnerosity and delicacy of feeling, the narrator makes no distinction between men and women: neither sex has a monopoly over these features.

The second category of woman characters are the members of the governor's family. The governor himself is yet another example of an incorrigible Don Juan and in the end he loses his high post as the result of his pursuit of women. The two ladies in the family are the governor's wife and his daughter, a girl of about fifteen or sixteen.

The two ladies are radically different from each other in character. The wife, without being evil, is very conscious of her status, is domineering with other members

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of her social circle, and is at times even rude when she treats people as non-persons (VII, 256). Her position as wife of the governor and first lady of the district is all she really cares about, since her personal life contains no happiness for her. But her daughter appears to be genuinely fond of her mother (VII, 283). In this relationship one could say that the mother has a caring daughter, rather than the other way round. Indeed, in contrast to the mother the daughter is depicted as a truly charming human being. The young Sof'ia L'vovna is full of life and is quite aware of her personal attractiveness. Nevertheless, her good breeding does not allow her to express her moods and her emotions freely to people she does not know well or, above all, to engage in coquetry:

> Ona laskovo, nemnogo krasneia, otvetit na poklon veseloi ulybkoi, s ottenkom legkoi ironii; kotoraia, kak skrytaia bulavka, net-net, da i kol'net. Ditia i vmeste ne ditia: prelest' devushka! Ona milo krasnela. Rumianets vspykhnet i v tu zh sekundu spriachetsia, i opiat' pokazhetsia, glazki blesnut i prikroiutsia resnitsami.
>
> Ia bol'sheiu chast'iu ugadyval, chto u nee na ume, i skazhu ei, a ona milo vspykhnet i kivnet utverditel'no, esli ugadaiu. Inogda skazhu kakoe-nibud' svoe nabliudenie i rassmeshu ee. Pokazhutsia dva belykh chudesnykh zubka. (VII, 281)

As one can see from the above, the expressions that the author uses indicate that the girl displays her emotions almost in spite of herself. Sof'ia L'vovna thus comes out as a limpid character free from either hypocristy or mannerisms. She is capable of enjoying life even in adverse circumstances and when her father, the governor, loses his

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job and the whole family has to leave town, she quickly overcomes the initial turmoil (VII, 297), remains calm and cheerful, keeps her appetite, and even manages to acquire a becoming sun tan (VII, 307, 312).

This portrait of the governor's daughter stands out particularly well against the character of the mother, a woman who is resigned to her unhappy family life, who has shallow and mundane interests, and whose nerves need to be soothed with smelling salts (VII, 312).

Although all the members of the governor's family can be considered refined people, who follow Western ways in their manners, speech and clothing, the environment in which they live is not far removed from the traditional Russian ways. So, for example, the wives of landowners in the town continue, as in the past, to lay plans about marrying off their daughters profitably to an older, but richer man, rather than to a better looking but poorer young man whom their daughter prefers (VII, 261). Equally traditional is the way in which the governor's wife is shown special respect in church and gets an individual sanctified loaf ("prosvira" VII, 288) as a person of honour.

At home, in the governor's house, there is an area which is referred to by the narrator as "the women's quarters" ("zhenskaia polovina" VII, 283) and which is reminiscent of the times when the women lived separately in

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a terem.[15] and the men appeared as visitors. This is the place where the ladies of the house spend most of their day in the company of their guests, who are mostly ladies, or of those women who, in view of their inferior position, could be referred to as retainers.

The retainers in the governor's house are two sisters, called simply Lina and Chucha. They are girls in their late twenties who come from the old nobility but are very improverished. Thus they evoke a mixed feeling in people who, while they express interest in and recognition of their good family, see fit out of a feeling of superiority to neglect them as poor orphans. In themselves, the two ladies have diametrically opposite characters, and both portraits offer interesting psychological insights into the position of girls from the gentry who are now déclassé and who, for various reasons, no longer have, or perhaps are not allowed to have, either pride or personal dignity.

Of the two, Lina could be called a negative character, a woman who evokes the narrator's disgust, disdain and resentment. She is very active, nosy, and intrusive; she succeeds in making herself useful to the governor's wife, acting as her informant, her tradeswoman, and her efficient companion. Being false and unprincipled, she uses all her energies to endear herself within the governor's house and thereby indirectly acquire power and prestige with the townspeople. Above all, in spite of the fact that she does

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[15] See Sites 12-13.

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not love anybody or anything, she seeks a husband:

> Ona eshche i teper', kogda ia videl ee, skazyvali mne, ne poteriala nadezhdy na zamuzhestvo, khotia vse drugie davno poteriali ee. Ona sama nikogo ne liubila: ni gubernatorshi, ni ee docheri, nikogo v gorode; ne bylo u nee ni ptichki, ni sobachki, ni tsvetka na okne - nikogo i nichego. (VII, 292-93)

Lina appears to be afraid that people may discover the unsightly side of her inner nature and her secret indifference to them: she does not allow other people, particularly the governor, to look directly into her sly and searching eyes (VII, 283, 293). She also tries to conceal her hostility and contempt for her sister Chucha, and it is only in outbursts of temper that she blames her for being what she considers a dead weight in her life and an obstacle to her marriage. However, according to the narrator, who freely brings out all the unfavourable and even repulsive details in Lina's character, no amount of concealment or contrivance can endear her enough to anyone to receive a proposal of marriage:

> Ona byla nekrasiva: glaza smotriashchie ispodlob'ia, navisshii nad nimi lob i nemnogo vydavshiisia podborodok soobshchali ei vid molozhavoi starushonki. Uvertlivaia, skol'zkaia, kak iashcheritsa, ona vse toropilas', bezhala, v rukakh u nee vsegda bylo kakoe-nibud' delo, ei vse bylo nekogda. Kogda ee ostanoviat na doroge, ona toroplivo otvechaet, ne gliadia nikomu priamo v glaza, v protivipolozhnost' sestre, gliadevshei na vsekh nemigaiushchimi glazami. Nel'zia poniat', na chem osnovyvalis' ee nadezhdy naiti muzha. Razve na tom, chto u nee byli "zolotye ruki". (VII, 293)

Lina's sister, Chucha whose honest and unblinking look is mentioned in a previous quotation, is an interesting and

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unusual character. Of all the characters in Goncharov, whether women or men, she is the only one who could be labelled a "saintly fool."[16] Whereas Lina who has no feelings, continuously uses her small but sharp mind to look after her interests, and treats her benefactors with servility as her superiors, her sister Chucha is a girl who is all feeling and unsuppressed emotion, one who uses only her heart with very little of her mind, and treats other people with open friendliness, as though God had created all men as equals.

Because of her absentmindedness, Chucha is incapable of performing even the easiest chores, such as pouring out tea, giving medicine, or even reading out loud, without making mistakes or forgetting something. Her absentmindedness makes her the laughing stock of most of the members of the governor's household, with the exception of the governor's wife, who reacts to Chucha's blunders without humour, sternly reprimands her for even a minor mistake, and frequently punishes her by sending her away from the house for several days.

As an entertainer of the governor's guests Chucha is equally inadequate. Her meek, simple and friendly nature makes her completely oblivious to the real malice in people's reactions and totally unresponsive to the demands of social hypocrisy. She treats all newcomers with the same genuine and joyful hospitality, and makes sincere efforts to

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[16] Dostoievskii's The Idiot was published about a decade earlier in 1868.

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entertain them and keep them from being bored. Thus she tells them all the things which she herself has observed or heard and which she considers amusing, interesting or useful. In this way she reveals small and big secrets of the governor's family circle, repeats things which were said behind a guest's back, or mentions those casual and indecorous details which, according to the rules of polite society, have no place in the drawing room.

What Chucha has to say is in fact usually both amusing and well intentioned, and the thoughts that she expresses are not so different from those of ordinary people. The problem is that in society people censor their thoughts and usually do not say everything that is on their mind, only revealing what suits their purposes. Chucha, therefore, behaves in naive way and gives her listeners a sense of amused superiority:

> U nee ustanovilas' odna mina navsegda i dlia vsekh.
> - Zdravstvuite! - otchekanit ona kazhdomu vkhodiashchemu gostiu, vsegda s siiaiushchimi radost'iu glazami i s ulybkoi. - Proshu sadit'sia, vot zdes', podal'she ot okna, tut duet. Vchera Ivan Ivanovich posidel tut, potom tselyi vecher zhalovalsia, cto zub noet.
> Gost', ili gost'ia siadet. Ona ne smignet s nego: tak i smotrit ne nuzhno li emu chego, pushche vsego ne ushel by on, ne soskuchilsia by.
> - Mar'ia Andreevna prinimaet? Ne pomeshal li ia? - sprosil tot.
> - Net, net: podozhdite chutochku - ona seichas, seichas budet! Ona teper' v bufete po khoziaistvu, povar prishel. Ona zakazyvaet, chto obedat' segodnia... i brandit ego... - dobavliaet shopotom, vse ulybaias'. - seichas konchit.
> - Branit? Za chto?
> - Vchera stol'ko petrushki v sup navalil, chto est' nel'zia... Gost' smeetsia.
> - Pravo. Vy ne verite? Vot sprosite Sonechku, kogda pridet: tochno mukhi v tarelke plavaiut!

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Gost' opiat' smeetsia. I ona tozhe. Ei veselo, chto ona umeet zanimat'. (VII, 285-86).

In her kind-heartedness, Chucha does not realize that the guests are laughing at her rather than with her. To her listeners she presents a picture of comic inefficiency and makes social gaffes that are more amusing to them than the jokes which she tries to relate. To the governor's guest Chucha is simply a stranger or a poor girl who is beneath their notice. Chucha, on the other hand, treats them as true friends and tells them everything that should properly be reserved only for members of the intimate family circle.

In this way Chucha presents a pattern of behaviour which is the reverse image of the social blunders of the governor's wife. The latter makes mistakes by inadvertently treating people as non-persons (VII, 256); the former insists on treating all people as her equals and as the dearest of friends. This brings her reprimands, humiliations and punishments, since irrespective of birth, her poverty puts her in such a position that she is not expected to treat other people as her equals.

It is part of Chucha's truly egalitarian approach to people that she refuses to make a distinction between members of different religions. Thus, when the governor's wife entrusts her to give a sanctified loaf of bread (prosvira) to a hungry poor person, Chucha gives it to a poor Tartar beggar in the street, a Muslim, who gratefully eats the prosvira with a relish of spring onion (VII, 289).

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This unusual occurence gives occasion for immense amusement and laughter to Sof'ia L'vovna and her father, the governor, who after this episode actually starts treating Chucha with greater kindaness (VII, 289). His wife, however, who, as the author says, is a pious woman, reacts with an absurd seriousness and intransigeance. She punished Chucha by sending her away from home and even wonders whether the Tartar in question should be baptized.

According to the standards of the society in which Chucha lives, the girl does indeed make one serious mistake after another. But by the manner of this portrayal, the author invites the reader to ask himself whether Chucha is really so wrong and the others so right. Is she really such a good-for-nothing? The unlimited love for others, which Chucha is willing to give, her complete lack of pride, personal interest in or resentment against people, the joy which, often in spite of herself, she spreads around her, make this selfless person look more like a saint than a failure. If there is anyone who suffers from her feelings it is she herself. Chucha never does harm to anyone, and sometimes unwittingly does good.

Chucha's typical gesture, so typical that it is even imitated by others and is repeateadly mentioned by the narrator, is to clasp her hands around her temples in moments of desperation ("Vot tak--ladoni k viskam: ah, ah!" VII, 289). This gesture is particularly significant in that Chucha uses too much heart and too little head. She feels

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guilty and inadequate because, while her actions and her words are well meant, they are misinterpreted, so that she only becomes aware of the need to use her head when it is already too late. On some rare occasions, Chucha's kind heart does impel her into taking some unprejudiced decisions which by the highest standards of humanity could be considered the right ones. But Chucha lives among people whose actions are strictly under the control of their mind rather than their feelings and who make her look like a brainless creature, a fool. Only a few people seem to be aware of her other main feature, her basic goodness and capacity for love which gain full expression only at the moment of the governor's departure along with his wife and his young, light-hearted daughter:

> Na odnoi iz stantsii byl zagotovlen obed, posle kotorogo bol'shaia chast' provozhatykh vorotilas'. Chucha razrevelas' na proshchan'e tak, chto tronula vsekh. ona polozhila golovu na plecho Sof'i L'vovny i plakala navzryd. Lina serdito otorvala ee, tolknula v karetu i, prosheptav chto-to na proshchan'e gubernatorshe, sama iurknula v èkipazh i sil'no zakhlopnula dvertsy. (VII, 305-206)

In the eyes of Chucha's sister Lina, this very virtue is only a drawback, just one among the other weaknesses of her sister.

If, as is generally assumed, Na rodine is biographical in nature, the female characters in the work must refer to the thirties, that is to an earlier period in the author's life. In depicting them, however, he betrays an interest in unusual psychological types which accords with the literary

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trends of the latter half of the 19th century. However in his next work, Mai mesiats v Peterburge, he again depicts characters of a more general social significance. In this work he gives sketchy portraits of pseudo-emancipated women, who reflect in an unsatisfactory way the results aimed at by the feminists.

Although several single women are repeatedly given brief mention, two of the married women, together with their husbands, are treated in detail. These are Count and Countess Reshetilov and Mr. and Mrs. Chikhanov. Both couples illustrate what could be called a distorted or corrupted embodiment of the ideals of women's emancipation and the equality between wife and husband, in that each spouse carries on his or her existence in almost total isolation from the other and the couple meets in the home almost exclusively on prescheduled occasions.

The marriage of the count and the countess appears to be based on the traditional principles of the prearranged marriage, although the couple try to put on a facade of being progressive and open-minded people. Both of them are said to have children, and the author specifically says that the count has two sons, while the countess has a young daughter (VII, 409). This seems to imply that, whether as widowers or divorcees, each could have had children from previous marriages. Their day starts with a breakfast that is different for the two of them: the count has the same breakfast as his own sons (men only), while the countess has

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the same breakfast as her daughter and the governess (women only). "Nakonets udarilo deviat' chasov, grafu pronesli chai, a grafine, docheri i guvernantke...kofe" (VII, 412).

The two spouses meet during the evening meal, on which occasion an elderly bachelor is also invariably present, a man who in the past had wished to marry the countess, but who had given up hope in favour of his richer rival, the count (VII, 416). Thus, against expectations, the marriage of the countess with the count turns out to be above all a marriage of convenience and hence does not differ much from the arranged marriages of the past.

After the evening meal the count plays cards with the men, while the countess entertains the younger generation: the count's sons, her own daughter and the young guests of both sexes. We learn that the countess refuses to adopt the traditional procedure of paying social visits in order to form a social circle and provide her daughter with invitations to the ball when she becomes of marriageable age (VII, 416). Instead, she resorts to more modern measures and invites young people into her house and thus provides her daughter with an adequate choice of male company.

During the day the countess has all her time to herself, which she devotes to pseudo-intellectual matters. She is particularly interested in religious activities and on social occasions she invites various illustrious members of the clergy together with prominent ladies from society. She assiduously attends various religious gatherings and

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enjoys each one. But she also forgets about them within the same day, since no religion presents any real interest to her ("a k vecheru zabudet ikh vsekh" VII, 415). When she has time to spare, she visits galleries and museums (VII, 416), but we may suppose that the countess is equally indifferent to this occupation. The role of the progressive and intellectual woman that the countess has assumed is only a facade that ill disguises her shallow but adaptable nature.

Since the count is a rich man, the countess can afford to show off her facade of intellectualism with some elegance. For those less comfortably off than the countess, the fashion for would-be intellectuals was quite different: the men wore long hair, while the girls' hair was cut short and their eyes were hidden behind blue glasses (VII, 413, 426). Whether or not their pretensions to intellectualism or progressive ideology were valid, young people of this appearance, who are twice mentioned in Mai mesiats, were definitely not welcome in the house where the countess lived.

The other couple, Mr. and Mrs. Chikhanov, are portrayed in a brief episode where they appear as two unprincipled, dishonest spongers (VII, 417). They act as conspirators and accomplices in a plot to extract a substantial sum of money. The husband does all the talking and complaining, while the wife pretends to be shy and pulls at the fringes of her shawl (VII, 417). It is not quite clear, however, exactly what is implied by the details of the luncheon for the guest

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and its aftermath. As the author says, a table had been laid out for three, and in the course of the luncheon Mr. Chikhanov received from his guest a considerable sum of money "to begin with," as the guest himself puts it ("vot vam, na pervyi raz dovol'no - skazal on" VII, 417). After the money changed hands, the trio engaged in a relaxed and cheerful meal, and when the guest left, the jubilant husband divided the booty with his wife, who received a fifth of the total sum.

Although the Chikhanovs are said to be in straightened circumstances and are in debt, they do not use the sum which they receive to pay off their obligations: the husband spends his share on his own pleasures, while the wife spends her share at expensive fashion shops. On her own initiative, however, she dresses up in plain black and, pretending to be miserable and sick, begs for more money from her rich acquaintances (VII, 418).

As a couple the husband and wife Chikhanov seem to be a caricature of the perfect marriage based on sexual equality. They are a perfect match, since the negative traits that they have in common make them quite compatible. They both lead independent lives, and in their independence each provides for his own livelihood. They are both very contented with this arrangement: the husband lives well and dresses well, while the wife leads her own mysterious existence (VII, 418). Their only unfulfilled dream is to move to a better apartment, which they cannot do because the

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manager of the house refuses to let their furniture out. The Chikhanovs, however, find a better solution: each of them finds a wealthy family on whom to sponge separately and thereby live the good life.

Mai mesiats conforms very well to the genre of physiological sketches, which generally encourage the portrayal of everyday reality in its most unembellished and negative aspects. But in the whole body of Goncharov's work it is hard to find characters as negative as the two Chikhanovs, and the absence of a single worthy human being, whether woman or man, is remarkable.[17] Moreover, since, as critics have already noticed, there is a clearly detectable elegiac note in the story,[18] the absence of a single attractive character seems particularly pessimistic in spite of the tone of optimism with which the story ends.

Negative characters also predominate in Ukha. It supposedly reflects a "half-true story" heard by the author in his home town,[19] and therefore refers to a much earlier period and accordingly to a non-emancipated environment.

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[17] The only person who is described with even a modicum of praise is the friendly and efficient manager of the house. Whatever the ironic implications may be, it is worth noting that the author concludes his sketch with a cheerful mention this man is planning to marry, and that his life, too, is taking on a new start (VII, 426).

[18] See Setchkarev (321) and Ehre (276). The apartment house described in the story is believed to be inspired by the house in Mokhovaia Street where Goncharov lived for many years (Setchkarev 320).

[19] See Tseitlin 299 and Setchkarev 373. Ukha was not published until 1923 partly because of its technical imperfections, but also partly because of its frivolous content. Usually it is dismissed as an anecdote, but closer inspection reveals that it has themes which raise it to the level of a parable and suggest a biblical interpretation.

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Nevertheless, the female characters in the story do not even pretend to display any of the modesty, kindness or composure that are characteristic of most of the women in Goncharov. In the first part of Ukha they actually appear as aggressors, who along with their husbands offend and even physically abuse a seemingly harmless and defenceless man, who acts as a driver of their cart. They poke him with their parasols, tease him and make him the butt of uncouth and vulgar laughter and amusement both for themselves and for their husbands.

In this story, then, it is the man who is put in an inferior and weak position in which he does not have the right to openly defend himself or take revenge. Hence, rather like some of the women in Goncharov's earliest works, the victim has to resort to dishonest and underhand means to handle his aggressors and avoid the feeling of personal inadequacy which they would otherwise have instilled in him. He restores his manliness by taking on each woman separately.

Although the brief encounters in the shelter do no credit to the virtue of the women (there is no sign of violence, their voices gradually becoming softer and softer),[20] all the women go through a complete transformation in their general behaviour and their attitude to the man. They turn docile, pensive and silent, as though they realize for the first time that here, too, is a human

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[20] P. VII, 493.

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being like themselves. In fact, one of the women openly speaks up for him, defending him against the other men, the husbands ("On tozhe chelovek, kak vse liudi, a ne to, chto kakoi-nibud'! - skazala odna iz zhenshchin" P. VII, 494). This situation recalls in reverse some of Goncharov's earlier works and the days when, in trying to assert the woman's right to equality, one had to be reminded that she, too, was a human being. From this work it is clear that the situation of the underpriviledged was not reserved for women alone and that women, too, can act as abusers who have to be tamed.

The final work, Prevratnost' sud'by,[21] also features an abused an unfortunate male. Fortunately, however, his abusers are other men, and it is comforting to note that in this tale completed only weeks before his death Goncharov portrays a woman who supports rather than undermines her male friend. The kind and selfless khoziaika in the story harks back to the traditional women of the author's earlier works. The term of endearment which the woman uses several times, serdeshnyi (P. VII, 493), conveys more than anything her capacity for compassion and feeling which comes straight from the heart, and reminds us that, in spite of the numerous other virtues with which the author at one time or another endowed his female characters, he had repeatedly stressed that a woman's capacity for feeling, her heart, was

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[21] The plot of Prevratnost' sud'by refers to the twenties and is believed to be based on a story which Goncharov heard as a young man. See Setchkarev, 322.

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her particular strength.

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CONCLUSION

Although Goncharov's mastery in the depiction of women characters has long been recognized, and although his interest in the social problems connected with the position of women is well known, discussion of these characters and of the themes connected with them has been limited mainly to the novels, and within the novels themselves mainly to the heroines. This dissertation has aimed at giving a comprehensive view of the topic, and has paid as much attention to the shorter fiction as to the novels. An advantage of such an approach is that it allows one to trace the development of Goncharov's thinking on the subject not only over the two decades or so in which he was occupied with the novels (1847-1869), but over the impressive span of six decades, from his first literary activity in 1832 to his final sketch of 1891.

As we can see from the preceding chapters, on the whole the themes connected with women reflect the general themes of each work. They deal not only with personal and social issues, but also with psychological, ethical and moral problems. In these matters, as elsewhere, Goncharov carefully refrains from pointing out a preferred solution or a superior choice, and maintains an artistic neutrality.[1] He strives to create the impression that, within the limits of the social framework in which they live, the characters

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[1] Goncharov's neutrality in his character portrayal was commented on by Belinskii (III, 813).

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themselves have the freedom to find the best way to handle their lives, to relate to others, and to choose between good and evil, virtue and sin, freedom and dependency. Somtimes the choice is difficult, with each alternative having its favourable aspects and its weaknesses. This even-handed approach, which is particularly evident in the novels, gives equal justice to opposing viewpoints, maintains the author's impartiality, and gives the reader the opportunity of making his own discriminations based on his own senses of values. One should note, moreover, that in most cases Goncharov's works do not end with any final solution, but leave open the possibility of further development, whether for good or for bad. In fact, however, most of his works end on a note of mild optimism, and within the narrative itself there are few irremediable events.[2] One should further note that, with the exception of a few women who act as contrasting foils, Goncharov's women are portrayed in their family setting, and that in spite of the dissatisfactions and the search for independence of some of them, none carry their rebellion to the point of leaving their families. In fact, the farthest they go without authorization is to a city park (such as Letnii sad) or a nearby ravine...

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[2] There is no unanimity on this point. So, for example, as mentioned earlier (Chapter two, n. 14), Setchkarev (72) feels that Obyknovennaia istoriia ends in total catastrophe, while Labriolle (182) claims that all of Goncharov's novels end in failure. Such differences of opinion would appear to be unavoidable. As Harry Levin remarks, "Readers are continually engaged in projection and participation, and every reading is bound to differ slightly from the reactions of any other reader" (Grounds for Comparison, Cambridge, Mass., 1972, 215).

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In his description of female characters there is a difference between the shorter fiction and the novels. In the shorter fiction Goncharov is more willing to deal with external problems in the life of women or with the attitudes of women who, as individuals, present little intrinsic interest and whose primary function is to illustrate the themes developed in connection with them. In the novels, on the other hand, especially in Oblomov and Obryv, the female figures themselves present a major interest evoked by their strong and memorable characters, whereas the events in their life are of only secondary importance and serve above all as a motivation for the development of the characters themselves. These women are shown to be memorable and admirable, even if the wisdom of their actions may at times be questioned. The major female characters, such as the heroines of Oblomov and Obryv, as well as Lizaveta in Obyknovennaia istoriia, are portraits of women whose intelligence, sensitivity, and determination, as well as their capacity for growth and development, command respect for women as human beings.

All the works, whether the short ones or the novels, reflect both their historical setting and the concerns of the period in which they were actually written. The early fiction describes mostly younger women in a traditional, unemancipated setting. They illustrate the problems of the limited and restricted life which women had to lead, and point out their dependence on others and their lack of

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personal freedom. They also describe the means by which women cope with such problems, and the unexpected help they sometimes receive from outside. Thus, in his earlier fiction, the author champions a woman's right to individual happiness and emphasizes her need for a fuller life and greater independence. Judging by the female characters of these earlier works, women are thought to be perfectly capable of attaining all of these ends.

The major characters of the novels include not only women of the younger generation, but also their elders, who usually have a traditional philosophy of life. The younger women, on the other hand, tend to act progressively, and if, as in the earliest novel Obyknovennaia istoriia, they are only dimly aware of the possibility of a more rewarding existence, in Oblomov Ol'ga herself takes decisive steps to control her life and, without violating any social conventions, arranges her own marriage and finds ways of helping herself grow both emotionally and intellectually, a possibility which would otherwise have been almost totally denied to her. The young heroine of Obryv, Vera, goes further in this direction, and insists on her absolute right to personal choice and freedom. She provides for herself sources of information and establishes unconventional social relations, which allow her to experience both the positive and the negative aspects of the freedom she so passionately desires. Her negative experience indicates the difficulties of a freedom that is carried out in practice as opposed to

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theory. The important point, however, is that she is shown as learning and maturing from her experiences.

It is known that after Obryv Goncharov considered writing still a fourth novel, this time on contemporary life, but did not do so because, as he said, the new life was still too new: "Novaia zhizn' slishkom nova, ona trepeshchet v protsesse brozheniia, slagaet'sia segodnia, ralagaet'sia zavtra..."[3] We can get a glimpse of how Goncharov would have approached "the new" by looking at the themes of his later fiction. Whether due to personal reasons, or to his general dissatisfaction with the new social aspects in the life of women, Goncharov's later fiction does not show the same interest, respect, sympathy or admiration for women as either his early short fiction or his novels. In fact one could say of his work in its entirety that his estimation of women rose steadily in a rising curve whose apex is to be found in the last chapters of Obryv, and that thereafter it fell markedly. Not that he openly admits any change of attitude: it is simply that the question of equality hardly arises any more, with women and men usually being portrayed as couples, whether married or not, who are treated with equal respect or disdain. The fact that some of the female characters in the later fiction are shown as shallow, aggressive, or dishonest (albeit along with their men) perhaps reflect a certain disappointment in the results of the social change which he himself had once

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[3] Goncharov VIII, 80. Cf. Rybasov, 325.

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so ardently supported. Some of the more satirical portraits tend to indicate that none of the true goals of the feminists, such as real work or education, had been achieved. In fact in this later period the only female characters who evoke the sympathy of the reader are those with an old fashioned way of thinking and a warmhearted, non-critical attitude to the people around them.

On the whole, the major female characters in the novels and many of the characters in the shorter works might be labelled today "women with positive thinking." They strive for happiness and self-realization, they are open to good influences, whether stemming from the past or promised in the future. They have a good sense of judgement and, while remaining basically unchanged and true to their own nature, they know when to make adjustments, concessions, and even sacrifices. Such changes can be painful, but they are not prone to indulge in self pity. Any setback is only a tactical withdrawal, an experience from which they can gain strength and learn for the future. They are never ready to forgo their claim to live their own life and make their own future. For Goncharov, life itself is neither a blessing nor a penance. It is what a person, be it a woman or a man, makes of it.

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APPENDIX

Titles of works discussed, with dates of writing and/or publication	Female characters discussed
EARLY SHORT PROSE	
Likhaia bolest' 1838 [handwritten]; 1936 [printed]	Grandmother Zurov Mrs. Zurov Fekla, Mrs. Zurov's niece Zinaida, a family friend
Schastlivaia oshibka 1839 [handwritten]; 1926 [printed]	Elena Neilein Mother of Elena
Ivan Savich Podzhabrin 1842 [date of writing]; 1848 [printed in revised version]	Anna Pavlovna The Baroness Praskov'ia Mikhailovna Masha
Pis'ma stolichnogo druga k provintsial'nomu zhenikhu 1848 [published under nom de plume A. Chelskii]; 1899 [included in a complete edition of Goncharov's works]	Landowner's young bride
THE NOVELS	
Obyknovennaia istoriia 1847	Naden'ka Liubetskaia Iuliia Tafaeva Liza Lizaveta Adueva Sof'ia, Aleksandr's country fiancée Mar'ia Gorbatova, Petr Aduev's first love Agrafena, Mrs. Adueva's housekeeper Mrs. Adueva, Aleksandr's mother Mrs. Liubetskaia, Naden'ka's mother

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Titles of works discussed, with dates of writing and/or publication	Female characters discussed
THE NOVELS (Cont.)	
Oblomov 1859	Ol'ga Il'inskaia Agaf'ia Matveevna Pshenitsyna Anis'ia, the cook Mother of Oblomov
Obryv 1869	Vera Marfen'ka The Grandmother Sof'ia Belovodova (née Pakhotina) Natasha (a fictional character in a sketch by Raiskii) Sof'ia's mother and aunts Mrs. Vikent'eva, mother of Marfen'ka's financé Minor characters: Mrs. Kmitskaia, Ul'iana Kozlova, Marina
LATE SHORT PROSE WORKS	
Poezdka po Volge 1873-74 [d. of writing]; 1940 [1st printing]	The female traveling companions of the main character Old peasant woman (brief sketch)
Literaturnyi vecher 1876-77 [d. of writing]; 1880 [1st printing]	Princess Tetskaia and daughter Countess Siniavskaia and daughter Lilina, a young widow
Vospominaniia: na rodine 1887 [d. of writing]; 1888 [1st printing]	Narrator's mother Mar'ia Andreevna (Mrs. Uglitskii), Governor's wife Sof'ia L'vovna, Governor's daughter Lina, retainer in Governor's house Chucha, retainer in Governor's house

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Titles of works discussed, with dates of writing and/or publication	Female characters discussed
LATE SHORT PROSE WORKS (Cont.)	
Slugi starogo veka 1885-1887 [d. of writing]; 1888 [1st printing]	Women in the lives of the male servants
Mai mesiats v Peterburge 1891 [d. of writing]; 1892 [1st printing]	Countess Reshetilov Mrs. Chikanov
Ukha 1891 [d. of writing]; 1923 [1st printing]	Three wives accompanying their husbands
Prevratnost' sud'by 1891 [d. of writing]; 1892 [1st printing]	Landlady of the principal character

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